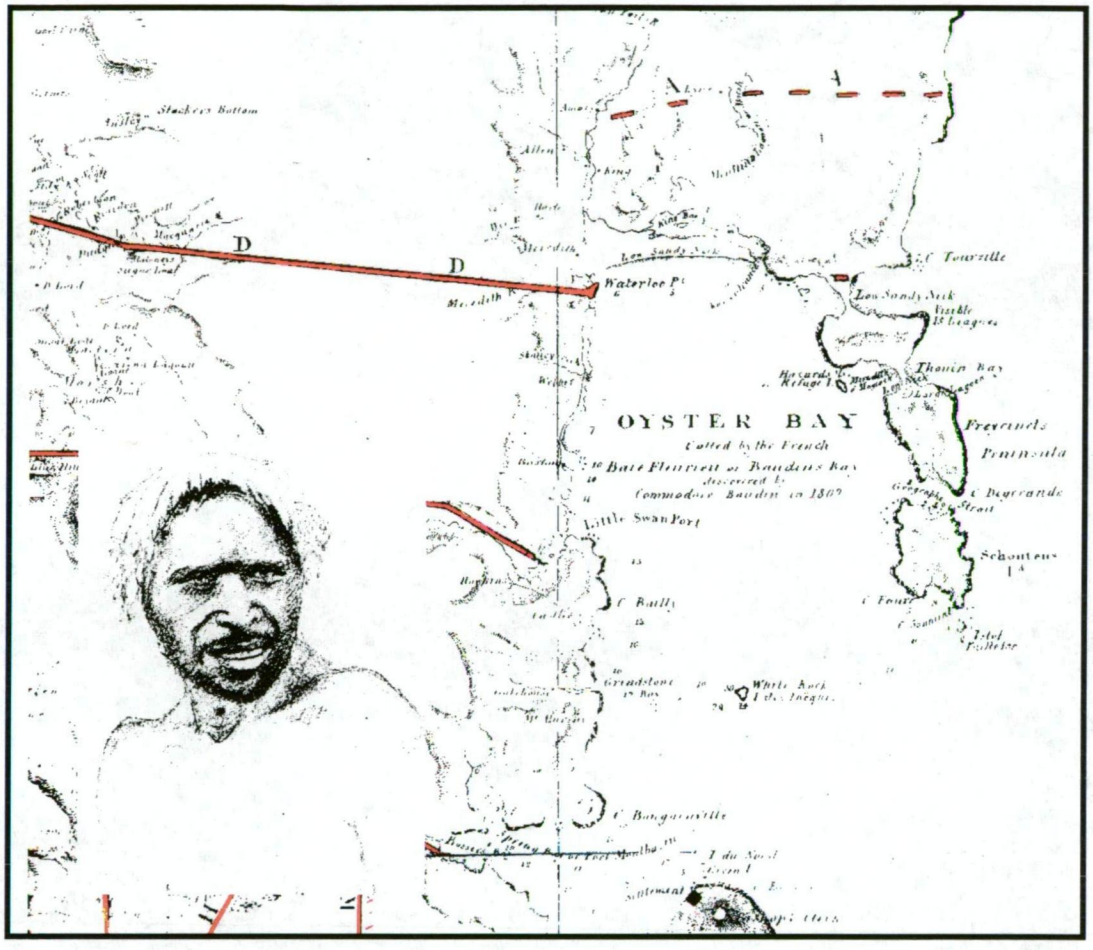
Levée, Line and Martial Law



A history of the dispossession of the *Mairremmener* People of Van Diemen's Land 1803-1832

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Statement of Authorship

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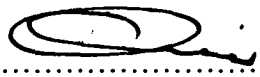
Signed  1st February 2009

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and finally, in sadness, from the late John Taylor, whose linguistic studies of the Tasmanians has contributed more to Tasmanian Aboriginal history in the space of five years than those over the previous century. His unfortunate death before the completion of his thesis is a great loss.

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'The natives that were sent from Hobart Town to Great Island'

Artist: John Glover, 1832

Under the figure top row, second from the right, is a pencil notation 'Montpeliada'. As Montpeilliatter was the leader of the band captured by Robinson on the Central Plateau on 31 December 1830, this group of Aborigines was apparently part of that band.

State Library of New South Wales

Introduction

An epitaph for a lost society

...on the 31st ultimo I succeeded in effecting a friendly communication with those sanguinary tribes. Their whole number was twenty-six viz *16 men, 9 women and one child including the celebrated chief MONTPEILLIATTER of the Big River tribe and TONGER.LONGTER of the Oyster Bay tribe. This is all that remains of both tribes. Tranquility is therefore (through the blessings of the Almighty) restored to the colony...They have placed themselves under my protection and are desirous for peace.*

George Augustus Robinson, Bothwell, Van Diemen's Land, 4 January 1832.[1]

Extirpation and exile: the destruction of a society

The government brig *Tamar* under Captain John Bateman sailed out of the Derwent Estuary on 17 January 1832, bound for the Great Island in Bass's Straits, carrying an unusually large number of passengers and stores. Of the forty or more men, women and children being transported to the Straits, twenty-six – sixteen men, nine women and a child – had surrendered to George Augustus Robinson and his party on the Central Plateau west of Lake Echo, on 31 December 1831. They were the last remnant of the *Mairremmener* socio-linguistic group known to the settlers as the Oyster Bay and Big River 'tribes' once numbering twenty or more bands, perhaps nine hundred people in total. Their country encompassed the east coast of Van Diemen's Land, from St. Patrick's Head to the Derwent Estuary, inland through the Midlands and onto the Central Plateau. The other Aborigines on board were *Mairremmener* previously captured or removed from their bands at an earlier date. Many had been kept as prisoners in the Hobart Town gaol; a few had accompanied Robinson on some of his conciliatory missions. These were the remnant of the People at the centre of the Black War that seized Van Diemen's Land during the years 1828 to 1830, and who were responsible for numerous murders, wounding, burnings and plunder, and who were in turn hunted down and killed or driven out of the settled districts, their traditional country.

As the brig passed *Moredertinener*, the point known to the white invaders as South Arm, at least three of the passengers – Pootappellureyanner,

[1] N. J. B. Plomley (ed), *Friendly Mission: The Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson 1829-1834*, Hobart: Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1966, p.572.

Larkumpinerungerner and Poettigwerlayde, elderly men and respected band leaders for many years – must have recalled the fateful day in September 1803, when another ship had brought the first white men into the *liapota* – the little rivulet now called Risdon Cove, where they established a permanent camp. While a sense of regret at their loss and the events of the past thirty years would have weighed heavily upon these three ancient survivors and all the soon-to-be exiles, promises had been made to them: promises of the right of return to their country on a regular basis; promises made by their captor-in-chief, the 'great conciliator', George Augustus Robinson. While they were now treated as captives and exiles, the People had not regarded themselves as such. They had willingly joined Robinson's party on an undertaking that they would obtain a conference 'with the Lieut Govr and that the Governor will be sure to redress all their grievances.'[2] The measure of that deception was found in Robinson's own words during his first conciliatory mission in 1830: that his intended objectives were the 'tranquilizing [of] the aborigines generally or [effecting] their entire removal from the island'.[3] The three elderly men and most of the other People were never to see their country again, dying in a foreign place. A successful and vibrant society which had developed over six millennia had been wantonly destroyed, another victim of imperialism and the process of colonization.

'Bands', not 'tribes': the societies of Van Diemen's Land

The historiography of the Aboriginal occupation of Tasmania and the subsequent dispossession of the indigenous inhabitants by the British invaders has almost exclusively treated the subjects as one people, albeit divided into a number of 'tribes'. Perhaps for the reasons canvassed in later chapters, the large majority of British colonists failed to discern the considerable differences in culture and language between the various bands distributed throughout the island, and, from the earliest records, the confrontations between the Tasmanians and the settlers were treated as the one – a clash between two cultures. This was so, even in the face of a growing awareness of the disparate nature of the numerous bands: some nomadic, some semi-sedentary, some unable to speak the language of others, many avoiding direct contact except on special occasions, such as ceremony or trade. However, from the earliest

[2] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p.572. 'Platform Bluff' is now known as Skittleball Hill, south-west of the Great Lake.
[3] p.224, 225 n.2.

studies in archaeology and anthropology it became apparent that there was not one but many histories.[4] In more recent times the archaeological investigations carried out by Rhys Jones, Harry Lourandos and others established the considerable prehistoric differences in the lifestyles and cultures of the bands, and Jones constructed a map of tribal divisions, as discussed in the following chapter: a construct which reinforced the misunderstandings of the early settlers, and which has been the received historic record ever since. A deeper and more circumspect analysis based on George Augustus Robinson's journals and language records was carried out by Brian Plomley in 1966, Plomley conceding that 'The status of the units which are here designated by the term *tribe* is not clear. Their small size suggests that they may have represented hordes.' Even with that qualification, he determined that at least forty-six 'tribes' or groups of tribes existed when the British invasion took place.[5] A careful and comprehensive study of the languages of the Tasmanians was carried out by John Taylor in 2006, from which he formed a hypothesis on the manner in which the numerous bands formed and distributed themselves throughout the island. Taylor rejected the notion of tribal divisions, and, following Plomley in his qualification, suggested that the social structure was determined by common culture and language, was not tribal but clan- or band-based (Plomley's 'hordes'), and that the supposed 'tribal' divisions were a settler fiction.[6] One purpose of this thesis is to reconstruct the history of the *Mairremmener* socio-linguistic group and its constituent bands, following Taylor's hypothesis.

When successive waves of Aboriginal peoples crossed the Bassian Plain – the then existing land bridge between the Australian mainland and Tasmania – from 35,000 BP onwards, the movements were not a sudden rush to discover new country; rather, they were a series of migrations of nomadic peoples following cultural norms,

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[4] Gilbert Robertson, in evidence given to the Aborigines' Committee in 1830, declared that 'many of the Oyster Bay mob have been killed by the Port Dalrymple natives.' *Van Diemen's Land: Copies of all correspondence between Lieutenant-Governor Arthur and His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies, on the subject of the military operations lately carried on against the Aboriginal inhabitants of Van Diemen's Land*, Hobart: Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1971, p. 48. Robertson was one of many observers that witnessed the internecine warfare between bands. Also Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 134, and many other examples under the heading 'Aborigines – tribal matters – intertribal animosity and conflict'.

[5] *Friendly Mission*, pp. 968, 969.

[6] John Taylor, *A Study of the Palawa (Tasmanian Aboriginal) Place Names*, unpublished master's thesis, University of Tasmania, Launceston, 2006; and uncompleted PhD thesis 2007. Also from personal comments to the author.

movements regulated and sometimes demanded by the changing climate. Archaeological and historic linguistic studies have provided some insight into how, when and where these migrants moved onto the Tasmanian landmass. By 6000 BP they had begun to form into the bands observed by the early Europeans who, from the seventeenth century, touched upon the shores of what was now an island, the Bassian Plain having drowned around 10,000 BP as the result of the rising seas in the early Holocene era. The isolation of Tasmania from mainland Australia brought about changes in the cultures which the migrants had brought from other places. Those cultures did not necessarily prove appropriate for the environment and the ecology of their new country. Adaptation to this place with its colder climate and its abundance of terrestrial and maritime resources was essential. However, some of their mainland culture remained, albeit stemming from an earlier age. The essence of nomadic life – regular migrations for all-of-culture purposes such as food quest, trade and ceremony persisted, and was successfully adapted to the Tasmanian environment. As the distinguished archaeologist Rhys Jones has pointed out, simplification of cultural practices took place, particular in the form of the toolkit used in hunting and gathering. Although such simplification has been taken as cultural regression leading to a 'doomed society', the Tasmanians were capable of considerable cultural and technological adaptation that reflected a developing and vibrant society.[7] The creation of a unique cosmology, the use of anthropogenic firing to manipulate the environment, boat building and seamanship were all developments that expanded their universe. Proof of the adaptability of the Tasmanians following the British invasion was found in the rapid acquisition and successful use of European dogs for hunting and companionship. Even though population growth was apparently slow as indicated by the relatively small population observed by the invaders, control of population was a factor of hunter-gatherer societies. Nomadism by its very nature required the ability to move quickly and at short notice, movements not possible within large sedentary populations. Population control in itself is a prime example of adaptation to a chosen nomadic lifestyle. By the time the decision had been made by the British Government to seize and colonize Van Diemen's Land, the *Mairremmener* bands had formed into a successful society, with a shared language and customs.

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[7] Rhys Jones, 'The Tasmanian Paradox', *Stone Tools as Cultural Markers: change, evolution and complexity*, R. V. S. Wright (ed), Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1977, pp.202,203.

The viceroy's dilemma: humanitarianism versus dispossession

The success of Robinson's second expedition during 1831 was of the utmost importance to the British settlers of the east coast, Midlands and the lower Central Plateau. They had considered themselves the victims of retaliatory acts of violence inflicted on them by the bands Robinson had set out to 'conciliate'; that is, the Oyster Bay and Big River People, the speakers of the *Mairremmener* language. Their country represented the finest open savannah and dry sclerophyll forest in Van Diemen's Land; the very country sought by the invading settlers for pastoral use. The *Mairremmener* were a nomadic hunting and gathering people whose traditional 'roads' through their country represented a vital part of their culture. These roads were not simply economic roads providing access for food quest, but served all-of-culture purposes such as trade, exchange of women (in fulfilment of exogamous custom), spiritual ceremonies and other celebratory gatherings. The loss of the roads as the result of white occupation and denial of access by stocking, fencing or other forms of enclosure, and expulsion by the use of violence, ensured that deadly clashes occurred, particularly from 1823 onwards. From that time, rapid expansion of white settlement took place through the increase in immigration from Great Britain as the result of the recommendations of Commissioner John Thomas Bigge.[8] The frequent clashes between Aborigines and settlers posed a legal and moral dilemma for successive Lieutenant-Governors of Van Diemen's Land. They were a particular concern for George Arthur, the viceroy from 1824 to 1836, the period encompassing the worst violence, a time which oversaw the end of *Mairremmener* society.

Arthur's dilemma stemmed from the clash between his personal beliefs and his official orders. Arthur's beliefs included a humanitarianism arising from his evangelical Christianity and his association with William Wilberforce's anti-slavery movement. His orders included the need to observe the policies of his masters at the Colonial Office. One such policy, contained in the instructions to a predecessor, David Collins, required the viceroy 'to place the Native Inhabitants ... in the King's Peace, and to afford their persons and Property the Protection of the British Laws'[9].

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[8] In particular, the third report of 13 March 1823 entitled Report of the Commission of Inquiry, on the State of Agriculture and Trade in the Colony of New South Wales.

[9] Lieutenant-Governor David Collins, *General Orders, Historical Records of Australia*, Series III, vol. I, p.529.

Placing the 'Native Inhabitants' in the King's Peace effectively recognised them as British subjects, but the very nature of colonialism involved dispossession of the land they had occupied over millennia; dispossession sanctioned by the same Colonial Office which demanded compassion from the colonial government and the settlers. As the Aborigines were not deemed to have real property in the sense of land ownership, settlers were enjoined 'not to suffer [their] property to be invaded [by Aborigines], or to be endangered by them.'[10] The settlers on the frontier needed little encouragement to enforce their rights, liberally interpreting any proclamations and general orders in their own interests. The societal structure of the Tasmanian Aborigines lacked any concept of individual property rights. The very nature of their nomadic existence required travel over the millennial roads which invariably traversed the now-private property of the settlers. The wide gulf between cultures and the lack of understanding created a tension beyond the wit and negotiating skill of the most compassionate colonial bureaucrat. A solution was certainly beyond George Arthur's skill and ability. His attempts at resolution caused him to fall between the two stools of compassion for the Aborigines on the one hand and the settlers' demands on the other, resulting in an inevitable, tragic conclusion.

In the event, the actions taken by Arthur in an effort to protect the Aborigines while, at the same time, protecting and furthering the interests and expectations of the burgeoning settler population only exacerbated the tension and resulted in all-out warfare. The complicating issues of administration of the convict system – a prime reason for the existence of the colony – and the pursuit of escaped convicts and bushrangers initially placed the question of Aboriginal rights and the care and maintenance of their society at a lower priority, especially in the early period of Arthur's governance. When the violent clashes and murders (on both sides) began in earnest from 1827 onwards, the loudest voices – those of the settlers on the frontier, their supporters in the local press and in Great Britain (the Aborigines having no voice) – brought about a change in Arthur's policies and produced a series of punitive proclamations against the Aborigines, and particularly against the *Mairremmener*.[11]

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[10] Governor Phillip Gidley King, *Proclamation, 30 June 1802, Historical Records of Australia*, Series I, vol. III, pp. 592, 593.

[11] The murders of two women and a child at Oatlands in October 1828, and the murder of a boy and the wounding of his mother and sister at Green Ponds in the same month, aroused particular horror

Proclamations of expulsion from the settled districts (amounting to internal exile), of martial law, and finally the calling of a *levée en masse* to raise a volunteer army in order to drive the *Mairremmener* People onto Tasman's Peninsula amounted to desperate acts, none of which achieved the purported aims of the British Government; that is, goodwill, conciliation, amity and kindness. Quite the opposite occurred. Together with the military and roving parties sent out to capture (or kill) the Aborigines within the proclaimed settled areas, and the award of a bounty for capture, the punitive measures were one factor in reducing the People to the tiny remnant encountered by Robinson on the Central Plateau. When Arthur finally came to the realization that the use of force and violence was destined to end in tragedy (and leave a very public stain upon his administration), his embracing of Robinson's proposal for conciliatory missions to the various Tasmanian Peoples may have appeared a humane solution to what had been to him an intractable problem. Robinson succeeded in capturing over two hundred Aborigines and removing them to Flinders Island – the totality of the remaining Tasmanian bands. In a belated and almost derisory action, based more on economic grounds, the last Tasmanian survivors – forty-four people (twelve men, twenty-two women and ten children) – were repatriated from the Wybalenna settlement on Flinders Island to Oyster Cove on the Tasmanian mainland in October 1847.[12] Ten *Mairremmener* People were amongst them.

The ideology of imperialism and the process of colonization

The *Mairremmener* were some of the Tasmanian People observed by the European maritime explorers, from Abel Jans Tasman in 1642 to Nicholas Baudin in 1802.[13] The explorers' observations provided the earliest ethnographic information on the Tasmanians; however, the prime purpose of most of these expeditions was in furtherance of imperial objectives; that is, the acquisition of colonies for the various European powers; or, at the least, for the purposes of exploration and hydrography, charting being the preliminary requirement for future imperial aims. Imperialism was

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amongst the settlers, and brought strident calls for retaliation. *Hobart Town Courier*, 1 November 1828.

[12] James Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians, or, The Black War of Van Diemen's Land*, London: Sampson Low, Son & Marston, 1870, p.272.

[13] The various maritime explorers were: Tasman (Dutch), 1642; Nicholas Marion du Fresne (French), 1772; James Cook and Tobias Furneaux (British) in 1772; William Bligh (British) in 1788 and 1792; John Henry Cox (British) in 1789; Bruny d'Entrecasteaux (French) in 1792; Matthew Flinders and George Bass (British) in 1798; Baudin in 1802; and Louis de Freycinet in 1819.

one of the great political movements of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Its origins stemmed from the Enlightenment, with its precept of "perpetual progress" – the endless advance of civilization as defined by Europeans. Cole Harris noted that

> a fundamental distinction between Europe and the rest of the world [was a] difference codified and classified along a line from savagery to civilization; and that this universalizing discourse about the nature and location of civilization justified the European occupation of the rest of the world for prestige, profit, and the benefit of the natives.[14]

The perpetual progress of British imperialism aimed at colonization for the purposes of systematic mercantile exploitation of "discovered" lands, and the "civilizing" of the natives of those lands through the use of the tools of progress – Western science, education and religion.[15] Mercantile exploitation included the export of unwanted peoples from the motherland, especially convicts and the poor, whose labour formed a vital form of capital to be used in developing the new colonies. Upon colonization of these previously unknown lands they became 'waste', territory ready to be explored, mapped, named, surveyed and parcelled out to immigrant Britishers as private property. The now-privately owned lands could then to be enclosed and developed under the principles of 'scientific agriculture' – a product of the Enlightenment and the Agrarian Revolution sweeping Great Britain throughout the eighteenth century.[16] The Indigenous peoples were to be excluded from private property, and placed under some form of care where they could be civilized. Although, as noted above, the settlers on their newly-acquired lands were enjoined not to 'wantonly give [the Aborigines] any interruption in the exercise of their several occupations', exclusion by settlement did precisely what was prohibited. With the rise of the Evangelical Movement in the late eighteenth century, the promulgation of religion as a civilizing

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[14] C. Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance , and Reserves in British Columbia*, Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002, p. xxiii.

[15] "Discovery" implied that the new lands were *terra incognita*. They could be claimed by conquest, by cession, or simply by occupation, the latter in the sense that most "savages" (the indigenous peoples) had no concept of property; that is, they did not "own" the lands. Simon Ryan noted that the social construction of "discovery" in the 19th century was that 'everything seen was at once owned'. S. Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p.23.

[16] On 'scientific agriculture' and enclosure – W. E. Tate, *The English Village Community and the Enclosure Movements*, London: Gollancz, 1967.On "waste lands" – P. Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

force came to the forefront of the colonizing mind, and that was the tool preferred by many colonial administrators, including Lieutenant-Governor Arthur.[17]

The decision to colonize Australia, following the loss of the American colonies under the Peace of Versailles in 1783, was made in the light of suggestions by James Matra in that year, and the modified plan by Sir George Young in 1785. These two men concluded that a colony should be established *inter alia* for the transportation of convicts – a well-established practice over centuries when new colonies were founded. The undated, unsigned 'Heads of a Plan' of 1786 which formed the basis of the British Government's decision to found the colony of New South Wales at Botany Bay lacked any mention of the Aborigines.[18] However, the proposal did not escape public attention upon the effect it might have on the Indigenes. Alan Atkinson suggested that, even given the extent of territory placed under Governor Arthur Phillip's jurisdiction (that is, half the Australian landmass, and seawards easterly past Norfolk Island) 'it is not yet clear what [the British Government] meant to do with the new territory. They possibly saw themselves taking up Botany Bay alone, which ... would mean trespassing very little on native rights'.[19] In the event, Phillip's instructions contained the significant passage concerning the Aborigines, requiring him to

> endeavour, by every possible means to open an intercourse with the natives, and to conciliate their affections, enjoining all our subjects to live in amity and kindness with them. And if any of our subjects shall wantonly destroy them, or give them any interruption in the exercise of their several occupations, it is our will and pleasure that you do cause such offenders to be brought to punishment, according to the degree of the offence.[20]

This particular direction was repeated in much the same form in the instructions given to successive governors and lieutenant-governors of both New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, and was published by proclamation in the

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[17] Arthur's emphasis on religion as the prime tool of 'civilizing' the Aborigines is found in his instructions to Commandant Nickolls at the Flinders Island Settlement on 30 May 1835. Arthur considered that 'the inculcation of the first principles of the Religion, not of nature, as it is called, but of the Bible, is the most effectual mode of introducing civilization.' N. J. B. Plomley (ed), *Weep in Silence: A History of the Flinders Island Aboriginal Settlement*, Hobart: Blubber Head Press, 1987, p. 86.

[18] G.B. Barton, 'Heads of a Plan', *History of New South Wales from the Records*, vol.1 – Governor Phillip 1783-1789, Sydney: Charles Potter, Government Printer, 1889, pp.432-435.

[19] A. Atkinson, 'The Ethics of Conquest', *Aboriginal History*, Vol. 6, 1982, p. 82.

[20] *Historical Records of Australia*, series I, vol. I, pp. 13, 14.

colonial press.[21] However, the value of the directions issued by the Colonial Office should be placed in the context in which they were written. Mark McKenna has pointed out that

> the political culture that prevailed in London in the 1830's and 1840's, and the bureaucratic culture of empire, were acutely aware of the importance of maintaining a politically sensitive and humane legacy on the public record. It was required that colonial despatches express concern for the rights of Aboriginal people ... The officials who drafted these dawdling despatches also read the despatches that arrived from Australia which explained that the government was powerless to stop the squatters from doing as they pleased.[22]

It can be argued that much the same culture prevailed from the time of first settlement of Van Diemen's Land in 1803, and that the respective Lieutenant-Governors of the new colony were equally fettered in their powers of enforcement, through factors of manpower, the tyranny of distance, and particularly, the will to put well-intentioned policies into practice in the face of settler opposition.

A paradigm of British imperialism: the Mairremmener *People*

For the reasons noted above, the history of the dispossession of the *Mairremmener* socio-linguistic group by the British must begin with an examination of their social structure before contact with the Europeans. By revealing the nature of their society, the subsequent misunderstandings that led to violence and warfare can be explained. Further, by gaining an understanding of their culture from the perspective of the People, an image of a society can be constructed. In this respect, two important hypotheses central to this thesis will be proposed. First, that *Mairremmener* society was unique, and unlike that of any other socio-linguistic group on the island. Secondly, that in the context of the history of white invasion and settlement, the *Mairremmener* bands were involved in the majority of the violence between settlers and Aborigines, and were the main subjects of the misguided attempts to at first 'civilize'– to treat kindly and live in amity – and then to 'extirpate' – remove forever – from the settled districts. These two hypotheses form the reasons and rationale for this work.

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[21] The instructions to Lieutenant-Governors Collins and Arthur mirrored those given to Governor Arthur Phillip as detailed above., with the exception that, in Arthur's case, his instructions included the duty to 'civilize the Natives'; an addition noted in Arthur's proclamation of 23 June 1824, on assuming the role of viceroy. Henry Melville, *The History of the Island of Van Diemen's Land from the Year 1824 to 1835 Inclusive, to Which is Added a Few Words on Prison Discipline*, London: Smith and Elder, 1835, (facs. ed. Libraries Board of South Australia, 1967). P. 23.

[22] M. McKenna, *Looking for Blackfellas' Point: An Australian History of Place*, Sydney: University of New South Wales, 2002, pp. 57, 58.

To this end, wherever possible, the *Mairremmener* language has been preferred for the names of individuals and places, except where context has demanded the use of given English names. By this usage, some empathy and understanding can be had for a unique society. Narratives of imperial expansion are invariably written by the victors, not the least because of the absence of written records of the history and opinions of the conquered and dispossessed. To recover firstly, the prehistory of a non-literate people before European contact, and then a history post-contact, reliance must be placed upon archaeological and anthropological investigations, most of which reflect imperialist ideology, particularly in the case of the narratives of the early explorers. Therefore, when an empathic construct is formed some liberties with historic 'truth' must be taken: for example, there is little in the written record of the initial contact between the Aborigines and the first settlers at Risdon Cove in 1803, and at the permanent settlement at Hobart Town. Yet there is some evidence that contact was immediately made; and to emphasise the effect of that contact upon the People, assumptions have been made drawn from observations of cultural practices.

Finally, the history of the dispossession of the *Mairremmener* People is an analogue for the histories of indigenous peoples in all those lands seized by the British under the cloak of the ideology of imperialism and the conceit of the superiority of Western culture. In Van Diemen's Land in the years between 1803 and 1832, the *Mairremmener* People suffered the brunt of colonial expansion, and were its prime victims. Their history is the substance of this thesis.

Chapter One

The arrival of the nomads: the prehistory of the *Mairremmener* People

They have managed one thing, and that the most important in human affairs, better than anyone else on the face of the earth ... their own preservation.

Herodotus[1]

Who were the Tasmanians?

Two questions puzzled anthropologists for over one hundred years – 'Who were the Tasmanians, and where did they come from?'[2] The accepted answer was from mainland Australia via a land bridge – the Bassian Plain – that existed between the Australian mainland and Tasmania during the late Pleistocene era, a period of much lower sea levels. Their ancestors were the ancient Australians who crossed onto the Australian landmass from the north during glacial maxima sometime after 50,000 BP. However, as recently as 1991, some anthropologists had speculated that multiple migrations onto the Australian landmass occurred, demonstrated by biological variations. Similarly, multiple migrations onto the Tasmanian landmass, demonstrated in biological differences between Australians and Tasmanians, were also considered a possibility.[3] This speculation has largely been discounted, and it is now believed by the majority of anthropologists that these first colonists were one distinct people, 'a homogenous Pleistocene population.'[4] Core testing of sediments in the Bass Basin by W. M. Blom in 1988 dated samples from 35,000 BP, and concluded that they had formed 'during periods of lowered sea-level preceding the last glacial [age].'[5] Blom posited that a land bridge existed at this time, with a large shallow lake at its centre. As the world's glaciers retreated over the next 20,000 years and sea levels rose the land bridge drowned, the rising seas first isolating the western portion of the bridge (across the present King

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[1] Herodotus, *History, Book 4.46,* quoted in J. Sellars (ed), *Nomadic Trajectories*, PLI Warwick Journal of Philosophy, vol.7, 1998, p. 76.

[2] S. Bowdler, "Comments" in C. Pardoe, 'Isolation and Evolution in Tasmania', *Current Anthropology*, vol. 32, No. 1, February 1991, p.12. H. Lourandos, *Continent of Hunter-Gatherers: New Perspectives in Australian Prehistory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p.244.

[3] Origins such as direct migration in Pleistocene times from 'Sundaland' or India were proposed. See Christy G. Turner II in Pardoe, p. 16.

[4] H. Lourandos, 'Hunter-gatherer cultural dynamics: long-and short-term trends in Australian prehistory', *Journal of Archaeological Research*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1993, p.69.

[5] W. M. Blom, 'Late Quaternary sediments and sea-levels in Bass Basin, southeastern Australia – A preliminary report', *Search*, vol.19, no.2, March-April 1988, pp.94-96.

Island), giving the "lake" an outlet to the sea; then isolating the Bassian Rise (the eastern link between Flinders Island and the mainland); and finally drowning the Banks Strait link between Flinders Island and Tasmania. By 8,000 years BP Tasmania was totally isolated from the mainland. J. N. Jennings pointed out that, as the glacial periods fluctuated in this era, the drowning of the land bridge may have been intermittent.[6]

This tends to confirm the great majority of archaeological and anthropological opinion: that it is likely Aborigines from the Australian mainland crossed the land bridge and began occupying Tasmania during the latter Pleistocene epoch, up to 35,000 years ago.[7] Occupation at the Warreen cave site on the Maxwell River in southwest Tasmania has been dated to 34,790 ± 510 years BP, and other cave sites – Nunamira, Bone and ORS 7 – at around 30,000 years BP.[8] Harry Lourandos considered the forests of Tasmania would at that time have been confined to the southwest region. During the glacial maximum that followed, that region would have become, in Lourandos' words, a 'refuge zone' within which the population concentrated with degrees of nomadism and sedentism, governed by 'an increase in bioproduction', with specialised hunting of particular species. The work of Richard Cosgrove to some extent supports this thesis, but places more emphasis on the likely sedentary nature of the occupants of the southwest rainforest valleys, perhaps with higher population densities.[9] Cosgrove's conclusions are contested by Lourandos on the grounds that they present a too-static model that 'does not take into consideration the climatic and archaeological changes evident in their very long sequences.'[10] That point is also raised by Jennings, inasmuch as there is evidence sea levels were not eustatic: geological studies have detected crustal movements of the earth's surface at various points which had a significant effect on sea levels where that occurred. Jennings particularly pointed to evidence of tectonic warping in south-eastern

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[6] J. N. Jennings, 'Sea Level Changes and Land Links', *Aboriginal Man and Environment in Australia*, D.J. Mulvaney & J. Golson (eds), Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1971, p.9.

[7] Other theories such as multiple migrations (Birdsell) or dual origin from 'branching' (Turner) are not canvassed in this paper.

[8] H. Lourandos, *Continent of Hunter-Gatherers: New perspectives in Australian prehistory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, p.248, confirmed more recently by the work of Richard Cosgrove, 'Late Pleistocene behavioural variation and time trends: the case from Tasmania', *Archaeology in Oceania*, vol.30 (1995), pp.83-104.

[9] R. Cosgrove, J. Allen & B. Marshall, 'Paleoecology and Pleistocene human occupation in south central Tasmania', *Antiquity*, vol. 64, (1990), pp.73,74.

[10] Lourandos, 'Hunter-gatherer cultural dynamics', p.73. 'Refuge zone' implied a place with a biota capable of supporting the inhabitants.

Australia.[11] The resulting cases of fluctuating sea levels would appear to support Lourandos's thesis of frequent population movements over a long sequence.

The rest of Tasmania, from the Central Plateau, the northwest and northeast, to the east coast was extensively glaciated and arid.[12] The environment would not have sustained any permanent form of habitation. Archaeological evidence for the occupation of these other parts of Tasmania stems from the current Holocene epoch, about 10,000 years BP, late in the period of the retreat of the Pleistocene glaciers. Rhys Jones' investigations of the Rocky Cape caves in the north-west established a basal date of settlement of 8,000 years BP.[13] On the Central Plateau, the glacial retreat lead to forest migration onto the Plateau around 11,500 years BP, followed by human occupation. The Warragarra rock shelter on the lower northern slopes of the Plateau has a basal occupation date of 10,600 ± 450 years BP. It was later abandoned, then reoccupied from around 3,380 ± 100 years BP.[14] Cosgrove's 1984 investigations of the Central Plateau proper revealed 202 sites of occupation at a density of 4.9 sites per square kilometre, indicating reasonably intensive occupation, possibly during the 'last climatic optimum between 8,000 and 5,000 years BP' or alternatively, 'ephemeral camps, only used in times of optimum weather conditions.'[15]

From limited investigations, the north-east appears to have been occupied around 8,300 ± 80 years BP.[16] The occupation of the south-east probably began around 8000 years BP, but Lourandos noted more intensive occupation (indicated by coastal middens) from around 5000 years BP, when sea levels stabilised and favourable coastal fishing conditions were established.[17] Lourandos contrasted the settlement of this country with that of the north-west. In the latter area, evidence of complex long-term base camps was found, indicated to some degree by climate – the north-west being subject to year-round

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[11] Jennings, 'Sea level changes and land links', p. 2.
[12] pp.254, 255.
[13] R. Jones, 'The Tasmanian Paradox', p. 194.
[14] Lourandos, *Continent of Hunter-Gatherers*, pp.263, 264.
[15] R. Cosgrove, *Aboriginal Economy and Settlement in the Tasmanian Central Highlands*, Hobart: National Parks and Wildlife Service, 1984, pp.88,89.
[16] p.272.
[17] p.270. The whole question of sea-levels in the Holocene is contested – see Jennings, 'Sea level changes and land links', and M.J. Rowland, 'Aborigines and environment in Holocene Australia', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, 1983, no.2. Rowland argues that sea levels fluctuated extensively during this epoch due to climatic change, resulting in inland migrations. These movements would affect any attempts at population estimates.

rainfall and relatively low temperatures. In the case of the south-east, as abundant food resources existed in this fertile area, extensive mobility required for food quest was not necessary, and yet the people were nomadic and there were no indications of base camps or permanent settlement of any kind. Apart from his investigations of coastal sites Lourandos also carried out investigations of inland sites in the south-east. One particular site – Crown Lagoon, 25 kilometres inland from the coast – 'represented a transient hunting camp with the emphasis on kangaroo hunting and the manufacture of stone artefacts', which, taken with the coastal sites, represented

> a subsistence-settlement pattern peculiar to south-eastern Tasmania [which] could be characterised as incorporating dispersed activities with specialised use of resources at task-specific sites – both marine and terrestrial.'[18]

He further considered that 'Cultural factors ... such as lower population density and a more open and flexible social system might have influenced the mobile, spatially dispersed pattern [of the south-eastern people].'[19] In short, Lourandos depicted the nomadic nature of the eastern peoples, who were to become known to the British colonizers as the "Oyster Bay, Big River and Northern Midlands tribes".

These investigations pointed to the basic nature of the development of the different societies that populated Tasmania from prehistoric times, but gave no indication of how each society formed from the prehistoric bands into distinct socio-linguistic groups occupying specific parts of the island.[20] Jones, in his *Appendix* to Norman Tindale's *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia*[21], proposed the existence of nine 'tribes', all belonging to the same culture, speaking five different but related languages. These tribes were composed of seventy to eighty-five 'bands', these bands owning 'country'– lands with somewhat amorphous boundaries within which degrees of exclusive rights were maintained. Jones' estimate of the total population of the nine tribes was a 'conservative' number between 3000 and 4000 people.[22] He also estimated the population of the Oyster Bay 'tribe', the agglomeration of up to fifteen bands, as ranging between 600 and 800 people, making it the largest of the Aboriginal societies at the time of British

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[18] Cosgrove, *Aboriginal Economy*, p.269

[19] p.270.

[20] The use of the terms 'society' and 'People' has been preferred to an orthodox use of the term 'tribe' to describe the agglomeration of bands by language and culture. In the opinion of Plomley, 'there were no tribes in the anthropological sense, only loose associations of a few neighbouring bands.' N.J.B. Plomley, "Comment" in Pardoe, 'Isolation and evolution in Tasmania', p.15.

[21] N.B. Tindale, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia: Their Terrain, Environmental Controls, Distribution, Limits, and Proper Names*, Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1974.

[22] R. Jones, 'Appendix', *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia*, pp.324-330.

colonization.[23] Jones' estimates are based largely on early linguistic studies of Tasmanian languages and dialects by Milligan and Schmidt, and later studies by Capell and Plomley.[24] He also used ethnohistoric information from George Augustus Robinson's journals[25], French and British maritime explorers' accounts from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and colonial observations, together with the archaeological studies referred to above. This early work by Jones has formed the basis of further studies into the structure of Tasmanian Aboriginal society ever since, and is largely accepted. However, linguistic geography can also provide an indication of the manner in which individual societies form and develop. A recent work by John Taylor has extended the study of Tasmanian languages, and has rejected Jones' "tribal" structure, suggesting by analysis of the languages an alternative manner by which the various socio-linguistic groups established themselves in their respective parts of Tasmania.[26]

Taylor suggested that the first movement across the Bassian land bridge during the Pleistocene era was by the people of the Murray River Basin using the western part of the bridge crossing the present King Island. These people occupied the western littoral, moving inland via the river valleys and perhaps across the Central Plateau. Taylor supported this thesis by analysis of place-names with 'Palawa-Pleistocene' roots. He further concluded that these early migrants extended their occupation north-eastwards to the eastern land bridge across the present Furneaux group of islands, where they occupied the relatively fertile 'oasis' this ridge represented.[27] Here they fused with the existing occupants of the oasis, migrants from the same regions as the earlier peoples. Taylor did not identify any substantial southern migration of these fused peoples (whom he termed 'Furneaux Speakers') onto the Tasmanian landmass before 9500 BP. However, he suggested by placename evidence that they expanded along the then northern littoral as far as Port Sorell and some distance south along the eastern littoral. At the end of the

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[23] Jones, 'Appendix', pp.338, 339.

[24] J. Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Dialects of Some of the Aboriginal Tribes of Tasmania*, Hobart: Strutt, Government Printer, 1890; W. Schmidt, *Die Tasmanischen Sprachen*, Utrecht: Spectrum, 1952; A. Capell 'What do we know of Tasmanian language?' *Records of the Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston*, ns.25, 1968; N.J.B. Plomley, *A word-list of the Tasmanian languages*, published by the author in association with the Government of Tasmania, 1976. See chapter two for earlier vocabularies of Tasmanian languages.

[25] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*.

[26] J.A. Taylor, *A Study of the Palawa (Tasmanian Aboriginal) Place Names*, Masters Thesis, University of Tasmania, 2006. Taylor adopted 'Palawa' both as the name for the Tasmanian people and generically, their languages. Turner in Pardoe, "Isolation and evolution in Tasmania', p.16, claimed that 'Because we have almost no information about Tasmanian language(s), [anthropologists cannot] call on historical linguistics for aid.' Taylor's work has significantly corrected that omission.

[27] Taylor, p. 63.

glacial maximum, about 15,000 years BP, as the seas rose and began to flood the western end of the land bridge, more migrants – 'Victorians' – crossed the eastern end in a number of waves to occupy the whole of the north, north-east, east, and northern and southern midlands of the Tasmanian landmass. These new migrants expanded over time into the western areas, following the west coast south as far as Macquarie Harbour. Taylor considered this expansion coincided with the rise in sea levels at the end of the Pleistocene era.[28] This 'Victorian' occupation would have been limited by the range of the earlier Pleistocene and Furneaux migrants.

Taylor claimed that the final waves of migration across the land bridge occurred after the breaching by rising seas, when *Nara* speakers – people from the Mt.Gambier-Warrnambool regions of south-eastern Australia – who had occupied the King Island rise, moved south-east along the new northern coastline, extending from north-western to north-eastern Tasmania, then south to the Derwent estuary by 6,000 years BP. Taylor considered that the new migrants adopted many of the placenames of the existing peoples, leading to the development of dialects of the *Nara* language – a 'North-Western' dialect in the Derwent valley and estuary; a '(south) Western' [sic] dialect; and 'Northern speech', the language of the people from the Inglis River to Port Sorell in northern Tasmania. The final development of languages in Tasmania occurred among the remnant fused populations of the 'Palawa-Pleistocene' and 'Victorian' migrants, who then occupied north-eastern and eastern Tasmania. Taylor used the term *Mairremmener* for their coalesced languages, divided into a northern dialect and an eastern dialect. In many ways this analysis coincided with the work of Jones, but emphasised the point that temporal, spatial and ecological factors influenced the migrations and the formation of the various bands, language differences arising and subsiding with the waves of external and internal migrations and the intermix of the different peoples over millennia. The specific difference between Jones and Taylor lay in the manner in which the socio-linguistic groups formed.

In 1976, Nicholas Peterson analysed and mapped the drainage basins on the Tasmanian landmass. The boundaries of the various basins are shown in Figure 4,

[28] Taylor, *A Study of the Palawa Place Names*, p. 63.

overlaid on the "tribal" boundaries proposed by Jones.[29]. The coincidence is remarkable if not totally unexpected – physical barriers such as mountain ranges often formed boundaries between peoples. Peterson did, however, include a caveat: while drainage basins may form 'culture areas', these areas are contiguous along the coasts and a coastal 'culture area' is equally possible.[30] Peterson noted that this point underlined the fact that 'economy and environmental factors are not the only determinants of values and beliefs.'[31] Taking this latter point, Peterson's analysis equally supports Taylor's thesis of waves of migrants across the land bridge over an extended period, fluctuating with climatic changes, and originating from various quarters of the Australian landmass. Taylor's analysis of the Tasmanian languages therefore presented a new dimension to the theories of the origins of the Tasmanians, adding to the work of archaeologists and anthropologists, and providing additional logic to the manner in which they formed into the socio-linguistic bands observed by the early maritime explorers and the first of the invading settlers.

Who were the Mairremenner – the Oyster Bay People?

From the above it can be reasonably assumed that the *Mairremenner* or Oyster Bay, Big River and Midlands Peoples were an agglomeration of Taylor's 'Eastern dialect' bands, the names of which Plomley derived from Robinson's journals, as listed in Table 1.[32] They occupied the eastern part of Tasmania, from St. Patrick's Head in the north to Pitt Water in the south, and inland across the Eastern Tiers through the southern midlands and the lower parts of the Central Plateau. It should be emphasised that this assumption does not necessarily support the "tribal boundaries" proposed by Jones. It is a measure of commonality of language and it is highly likely that the day-to-day social structure remained within the independent bands. However, a close association existed between the *Mairremmener* and the *Tyrrernotepanner* (Campbelltown District People) and the *Lairmairremener* (Big River

[29] N. Peterson, 'The natural and cultural areas of Aboriginal Australia', *Tribes and Boundaries in Australia*, N. Peterson (ed), Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1976, pp.60-63.
[30] pp.62,63.
[31] p.63.
[32] The term *Mairremmener* will be used both for the language and the agglomeration of the south-east bands. The "tribal" names of "Oyster Bay" and "Big River" were the inventions of the British colonizers.

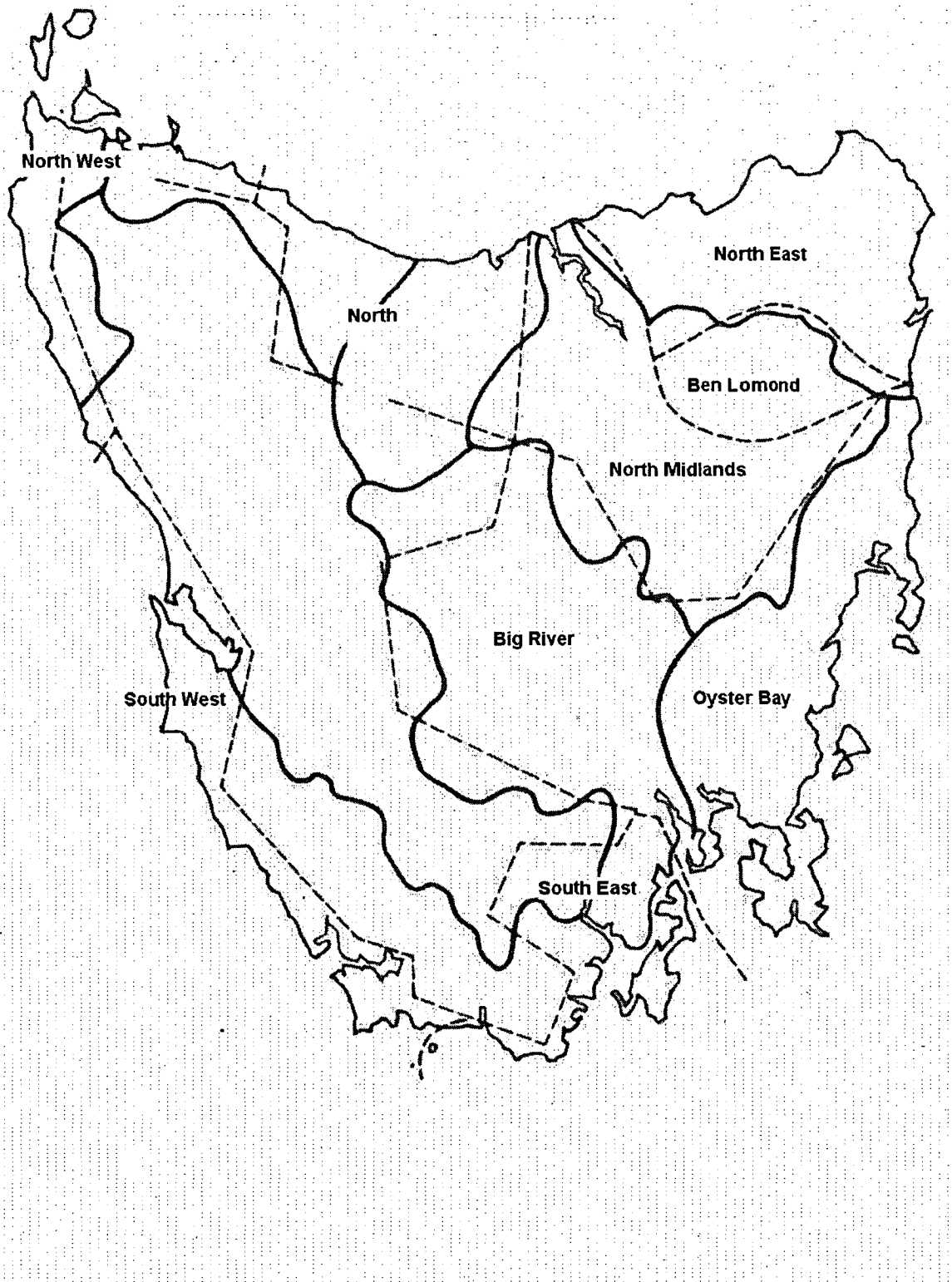

Figure 1: Combinations of *drainage basins* indicated by solid lines. Suggested locations of Aboriginal peoples shown by broken lines (Jones, 1974).

Source: N. Peterson, 'The natural and cultural areas of Aboriginal Australia', *Tribes and Boundaries in Australia*, N. Peterson (ed), Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1976, p. 63

Table 1.

The Bands comprising the *Mairremenner*[33] or Oyster Bay People of Tasmania

Band Name	Location	Plomley's Reference[34]
Leenneratteminnener	St.Patrick's Head	11
Linetemairrener	Great Swanport	12
Mayyerlower	Freycinet Peninsula	14
Loontitetermairrelehoinner	Great Swanport	13
Pyendaymairremener	Oyster Bay	19
Panneneveernokeer	Eastern Marshes	20
Laremairremener	Prosser River	21
Poticweladedy	Maria Island and adjacent mainland	22
Pydairrerme	Tasman's Peninsula	23
Moomairremener	Pitt Water	24

The following bands are those likely to have spoken the *Mairremenner* language, and were therefore of the same socio-linguistic group.

Tyrrernotepanner (Campbell Town District, North Midlands People)

Band Name	Location	Plomley's reference[2]
Peenrymairmener	Glen Morriston	16
Mawemairrener	Oatlands/Campbell Town	15
Tareernotemmeter	Hanging Sugarloaf (Campbell Town)	17
Rolemairre	Ellinthorp Hall	18

Lairmairrener (Big River People)

Laimairremener	Ouse River/Central Plateau	43
Luggermairrernerpairrer	North west of Great Lake	42
Torererpunmairinnerpairner	South of Mersey River	41
Panninher	Liffey River headwaters	40

[33] The word *Mairremenner* is used by Taylor both for the language of the Oyster Bay People, and for the agglomeration of the bands. Plomley use the word *Pyenremairremener* for the 'Oyster Bay nation'; *Friendly Mission*, p. 974 [15d].

[34] N. J. B. Plomley, *The Tasmanian Tribes & Cicatrices as Tribal Indicators among the Tasmanian Aborigines*, Occasional Paper no. 5, Launceston: Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, n.d., pp. 22-32.

People), all of whom spoke the same language and whose country was contiguous with that of the *Mairremenner* bands. This association allowed joint exploitation of the terrestrial and marine resources by all bands. The conclusion drawn by Jones that a "tribe" was 'the largest social unit which periodically and systematically met together for reasons of food collecting, leisure, politics, marriage or ritual' is probably correct.[35] In this regard, the presence of Oyster Bay People with the last of the Big River People at 'Platform Bluff' (Skittleball Hill) on 31 December 1831, when meeting with Robinson and agreeing to accompany him to Hobart, is an indication of their close association, albeit in extreme circumstances.[36] Records (the French maritime expeditions, survey and exploration journals) and settler's journals and depositions (Knopwood, Ross, Mc.Minn, et al.)[37] all describe band numbers in the order of twenty to sixty.[38] For example, in 1793 D'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, the captain of the *Recherche* on the d'Entrecasteaux expedition, recounted a sighting of a band of forty-eight people at a campsite on Blackswan Lagoon, consisting of ten men, fourteen women and twenty-four children.[39] Leschenault de la Tour, the botanist on the Baudin expedition of 1802, while on Bruny Island noted 'The number of savages we saw gathered together was about sixty men, women and children'. James Ross, publisher of the *Hobart Town Almanack*, saw 'a scattered crowd of about 60 aborigines ...' on his property on the Shannon River in 1822.[40] There are records of much larger groups apparently making seasonal migrations on food quest – events such as the collection of swan eggs at Moulting Lagoon.[41]

A record of a large gathering is found in the Reverend Robert Knopwood's diaries. On 9 October 1807 a party visited Brown's River (near the present Kingston) to 'see a great many natives.' The men were out hunting, but on their return, Knopwood

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[35] R. Jones, 'Demography of Hunters and Farmers in Tasmania', in Mulvaney & Golson, *Aboriginal Man and Environment in Australia,* p. 280.

[36] Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* pp.570, 571. For those reasons, the term *Mairremmener* will be used for the agglomeration of bands.

[37] M. Nicholls (ed), *The Diary of the Reverend Robert Knopwood 1803-1838*, Hobart: Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1977, p. 128; James Ross, *The Settler in Van Diemen's Land*, Melbourne: Marsh Walsh Publishing, 1975, p. 84; Deposition of Thomas McMinn in N. J. B. Plomley (ed), *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land*, Hobart: Blubber Head Press, 1991, p. 95

[38] N.J.B. Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines 1802*, Hobart: Blubber Head Press, 1983, p.132.

[39] Brian Plomley & J. Piard-Bernier, *The General: the visits of the expedition led by Bruny d'Entrecasteaux to Tasmanian waters in 1792 and 1793*, Launceston: Queen Victoria Museum, 1993, p.282.

[40] J. Ross, *The Settler in Van Diemen's Land*, p.84.

[41] 'The natives will now in the ordinary course, proceed to Molton[sic] bay for swan eggs and thence to Schouton's Main for crawfish.' Jorgen Jorgenson quoted in K. von Steiglitz, *Pioneers of the East Coast from 1642: Swansea, Bicheno*, Evandale: K. von Steiglitz, 1955, p.42.

estimated there were 250 to 300 men, women and children.[42] James Kelly, during his circumnavigation of Van Diemen's Land, had, on 17 January 1816, made contact with Tolobunganah and about twenty of his North Eastern People (*Trawlwoolway*) at Little Musselroe Bay, with whom he exchanged seal carcasses for kangaroo skins. The following day Kelly recorded that the 'whole tribe came down on the beach; there were about two hundred men, women and children, and at least fifty dogs.' It is likely that the first band had been joined by the other Cape Portland bands, such as the *Pinterrairer* and the *Lemoonnerlanner*. These "seasonal" movements or gatherings of larger groups across band boundaries are discussed under. It would have been during these movements of combined bands that settlers developed the notion of a "tribal" structure, as James Kelly noted in his narrative.[43]

Finally, on the issue of band boundaries, Ian Clark pointed out that in Aboriginal Australia there were 'two tribal boundaries – one the product of peoples' minds, the other based on land-use in the food quest'.[44] The latter boundaries indicated a range over which a band might hunt and gather; the former an 'estate', country for which a band had ritual responsibility, land exclusively "owned" by the band upon which others only ventured with the band's permission; that is, "whole-of-culture" boundaries. Even then boundaries (in Aboriginal Australia) were not lines on maps, but 'cultural landscapes', lands not delineated in a spatial or temporal sense, but mental constructs without a linear timescale; ways of "seeing" the land as a social expression, where boundaries may be well known but amorphous.[45] Language itself was one form of boundary between the bands, together with other social factors such economy, conjugal relations and cultural exchange.

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[42] Knopwood, Friday 9, October 1807, *The Diary,* p. 145.

[43] J.E. Calder, *The Circumnavigations of Van Diemen's Land in 1815 by James Kelly and in 1824 by James Hobbs*, (1881), facsimile ed., Hobart: Sullivan's Cove, 1984, p. 29.

[44] I. D. Clark, *Aboriginal languages and clans: an historic atlas of western and central Victoria, 1800-1900*, Melbourne: Dept. of Geography and Environmental Science, Monash University, 1990, p.5.

[45] L. Head, 'Unearthing Prehistoric Cultural Landscapes: A View from Australia', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, New Series, Vol. 18, No. 4 , 1993, pp.481-499. Head noted that 'The Australian evidence shows [cultural landscapes] to be at least Pleistocene in age ...' (p.495). It would be reasonable to assume that the migrants to Tasmania brought such Pleistocene understandings with them across the land bridge.

A failure to evolve: Darwinist determinism, economic abundance and the happiness factor

In 1974, Rhys Jones argued that the Tasmanians were culturally regressed. Rather than a condition of homeostasis, their culture was retreating. He expressed this view in the oft-quoted passage in *Stone Tools as Cultural Markers*:

> slowly but surely there was a simplification in the (Tasmanian Aborigines') tool kit, a diminution in the range of foods eaten, perhaps a squeezing of intellectuality ... The world's longest isolation, the world's simplest technology. Were 4000 people enough to propel forever the cultural evidence of Late Pleistocene Australia? ... were they in fact doomed – doomed to a slow strangulation of the mind?[46]

His view also carried the implication that the Tasmanian Aborigines were happy with their lot, their isolation from outside contact and insulation from new technologies leaving them finely balanced between the economic needs of the hunter-gatherer and the resources available. They were without the time or the need to develop more complex economic or social systems – in Jones' words the time to invest 'the advantages of new tools into the realms of the ego, the mind and the soul.'[47] This presumed failure to develop a more complex culture perhaps embracing the rich spiritual life of the mainland Aborigines, together with the failure to adopt new technologies would apparently 'doom' the Tasmanians to a regressed state – a state of devolution – a comment redolent of Darwinist determinism. In fact Jones placed the cultural status of the Tasmanians on the lowest rung on the evolutionary ladder. He noted that:

> Logically, there has to be one human society amongst all those recorded ethno-graphically, which, in terms of technology, is the most simple. I think that modern research confirms the candidature of the Tasmanians for that position.[48]

The thesis that homeostasis – the tendency of a population to maintain equilibrium – leads to "happiness" (or at least, satisfaction), has its origins in the work of Marshall Sahlins. In describing hunter-gathers as 'the original affluent society', Sahlins noted that:

> There is also a Zen solution to scarcity and affluence, beginning from premises opposite from our own, that human material ends are few and finite and technical means unchanging but on the whole adequate ... a people can enjoy an unparalleled material plenty, though perhaps on a low standard of living. That I think describes the hunters.[49]

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[46] R. Jones, 'The Tasmanian Paradox', pp. 202, 203.
[47] p.202.
[48] R. Jones, *Rocky Cape and the Problem of Tasmanians*, PhD Thesis, University of Sydney, 1971, p.28.
[49] M. Sahlins in Richard B. Lee & Irven De Vore, (eds), *Man The Hunter*, Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1968, p. 85.

That is, even though the 'worlds most primitive people have few possessions ... *they are not poor*' – poverty is a construct of Western civilization, and primitive societies are organized around the limited needs and the inhibition of avarice consistent with mobility.[50] During *Man the Hunter* symposium, in a response to a paper given by Sahlins, Lester Hiatt described the 'aborigines'[sic] as 'a happy-go-lucky people', and Lewis Binford noted that the 'happiness factor may not be ... a direct function of hunting' but the result of achieving a homeostatic relationship with regard to food resources, a condition which stabilises population.[51] Sahlins differed from Jones in the notion that the labour expended in hunting and gathering left little time for cultural development. Sahlins claimed that only three to five hours per day were spent in food production – 'Hunters keep banker's hours ...'[52] and, in the resulting extraordinary amount of leisure time, '[t]he great majority of surviving hunter-gatherers lead a life curiously decapitated and extremely lazy by comparison with the other few', who led '"an elaborate and exacting ceremonial life."'[53] In summary then, while Sahlins considered that hunter-gathers lead a happy and contented existence, Jones drew a less-charitable picture of culturally regressed Tasmanians, doomed to fade out of existence. He based his theory on four factors. The first, as previously noted, was the 'simple' tool kit as compared with that of the mainland peoples. The second was a much-contested thesis on the reasons for the Tasmanians ceasing to eat scaled fish. The third factor was the issue of fire and fire-making. Finally, Jones considered that the Tasmanians had neither the time nor the capacity to develop an elaborate cosmology and spirituality.

There goes the economic heritage: abandoning a fish diet

Jones' first factor impinged largely upon his second. There is no question that the Tasmanian tool kit was limited; however, as Horton has pointed out, a 'rich and predictable terrestrial environment [and a given abundance of marine resources other than scaled fish] would make unnecessary a whole suite of equipment – boomerangs and woomeras, fish hooks, nets and barbed spears are all superfluous.'[54] The Tasmanian tool kit was therefore ecologically appropriate, a simplification that demonstrated knowledge and careful adaptation rather than cultural regression. On the factor of the absence of

[50] M. Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics,* London: Tavistock Publications, 1974, p. 37.
[51] L. R. Hiatt and L. R. Binford, *Man the Hunter*, pp. 89, 90.
[52] Sahlins, p.34.
[53] p. 38.
[54] p. 31.

scaled fish from the Tasmanian diet, archaeological evidence from sites all over the island confirms that bony or cartilaginous fish ceased to be eaten after 3800-3500 BP.[55] Jones speculated that this was 'within the realm of cultural prohibition' and this 'intellectual event caused a contraction in [the Tasmanians] ecological space.' Even more dramatically, Jones claimed 'with this abnegation, part of the economic heritage of the Tasmanians slipped away.'[56] That is, the contraction in the diet was taken as cultural regression. In opposition to this view, Bowdler, Horton and Allen all argued that this universal prohibition ritual was a positive adaptive response, 'a sign of a dynamic culture rather than a culture in decay.'[57] It was a positive response in the sense that it eliminated the need for fish hooks, barbed spears and nets in a toolkit, as Horton pointed out.

In addition, a practical reason for the change in diet can be assumed from the work of Rowland, where he noted the fluctuating sea-levels during the early Holocene, pointing out that midden analysis on the eastern Tasmanian littoral indicated an absence of deposits in the period 3800 to 2600 BP.[58] An increase in sea levels would result in a population retreat from the coast and fewer marine resources, resulting in exploitation of new (terrestrial) resources in the highlands, together with expansion in the range of territory, 'emphasis[ing] flexibility and alliance [and] information sharing.'[59] Rowland observed that Bowdler established the appearance in the archaeological record of large ceremonial gatherings in mainland highland areas post-3500 BP.[60] The reoccupation of the Central Plateau during this time and the evidence of extensive archaeological sites on the Plateau may support the application of this thesis to Tasmania, and account in some way for the universal abandonment of a diet of scaled fish.

Finally, a further thoughtful issue is raised by Steve Brown in his report on the archaeological sites in eastern Tasmania. In discussing the absence of faunal remains in coastal midden sites he pointed to the difficulty in evaluating the effect of marsupial

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[55] Jones, 'The Tasmanian Paradox', p.196; H. Lourandos, *Coast and Hinterland: The Archaeological Sites of Eastern Tasmania*, Masters Thesis, Australian National University, May, 1970; B. Hiatt, 'The food quest and the economy of the Tasmanian Aborigines', *Oceania*, vol. 38, pp. 99-133, 190-219.
[56] Hiatt, 'The food quest', p. 196.
[57] Bowdler, 'Fish and culture',p. 338; Horton, 'Tasmanian adaptation',p.31; H. Allen, 'Left Out in the Cold: Why the Tasmanians Stopped Eating Fish' *The Artefact*, vol. 4, pp. 1-10.
[58] Rowland, 'Aborigines and environment in Holocene Australia', pp. 68-72.
[59] p.72
[60] p.72; S. Bowdler, 'Hunters in the highlands: Aboriginal adaptations in the eastern Australian uplands' *Archaeology in Oceania*, vol. 16, no. 2, p. 101.

carnivores on the middens – the Tasmanian Devil (*Sarcophilus harrisii*) and the quoll (*Dasyurus viverrinus*) in particular – which he noted 'may have been considerable.'[61] The bones of fish may equally have been susceptible to removal by those carnivores.

'Fire-stick farming': anthropogenic firing by the Tasmanians

The use of fire and fire-making are other contested issues. The use of fire by Tasmanian Aborigines to clear vegetation was noted by the first maritime explorers, and particularly by the early British settlers (much to their annoyance).[62] Horton summed up the widely accepted view on the Aboriginal use of fire as follows:

> [firing was in part] a deliberate policy ... the effect [of which] was to produce great changes in vegetation, essentially simplifying vegetation communities downwards along a spectrum from mature forest to immature grassland. This was economically important because while the forests were ... poor sources of food, grasslands ...were very good sources. The effect was to greatly increase the amount of productive land ... and hence the area which could be occupied and the number of people which could occupy it. It has not been suggested that these long term trends were recognized by the Aborigines, nor that they used fire intentionally to set these trends in motion. [The aims were short term], many of the plants which grew after the fire were valuable as food, while kangaroos were attracted to recently burnt areas to feed ... This whole idea of short term management of rate of production and long term increases in the area of production has been encapsulated in the phrase 'fire-stick farming'.[63]

The notion of the manipulation of fire to produce short-term advantage was elaborated by Jones in 1969, when he coined the expression 'fire-stick farming'.[64] Jones listed the following reasons for anthropogenic firing of the country by the Aborigines – for fun; for signalling; to clear the ground; to aid hunting; for regeneration of plant food; and to extend habitat. He noted that not all of these actions were deliberate: the extension of habitat, for example, would take millennia.[65] However, the 'open savannah woodland or parkland which greeted the first [Tasmanian] colonists with their flocks of sheep' was a result of these actions.[66] Jones' thesis, particularly on the issue of the ecological effect of anthropogenic firing, has become an accepted probability. Stephen Pyne, in devoting a chapter in his work *Burning Bush* to the 'Firestick Farmer', referred to the fire-florescing

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[61] Steve Brown, *Aboriginal Archaeological Sites in Eastern Tasmania: a Cultural Resource Management Statement*, Occasional Paper No. 31, Hobart: Dept. of Parks, Wildlife & Heritage, 1991, p.73..

[62] Observations of large-scale fires were reported by the Tasman, Cook, Bligh, Flinders, d.Entrecasteaux, and Baudin expeditions. In his diaries, Knopwood made numerous references to large fires set by the 'natives'. For example, on 18 February 1807 he noted 'No grass and the country on fire by the natives who are very troublesome to the men out a-kangarroing [sic].' Knopwood, *Diary*, p.127.

[63] D. R. Horton, 'The burning question: Aborigines, fire and Australian ecosystems' *Mankind*, vol. 13, no. 3, April 1982, p.237. Also more widely discussed in D.R. Horton, *The Pure State of Nature: Sacred cows, destructive myths and the environment*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2000.

[64] R. Jones, 'Fire-stick farming' *Australian Natural History*, vol. 16, September, 1969, p.228.

[65] pp. 226-227.

[66] p.225.

grass tree *Xanthorrhoea* as an example of 'the fire-driven Aboriginal plant economy'. The grass tree only flowers after fire. Its flower supplies 'the essential component of the fire drill' used by the Aborigines on the mainland.[67] Bowdler agreed that 'the manipulation of the Tasmanian vegetation by fire' was a technological advance, but considered that it was a relatively recent development.[68] On the other hand, Horton suggested that there is 'a natural potential fire regime in Australia which the Aborigines observed and made use of'. Many fires observed by explorers and settlers were natural; the Aborigines provided 'an *alternative* source of fires but did not alter the fire regime.'[69] Horton noted the suggestion of Nicholson and McBryde, that 'climate and soils were climax communities when the Aborigines arrived' and therefore the savannah and open forest so desirable to the white invaders was not the making of the Aborigines.[70] Horton further suggested that the notion of 'fire-stick farming' may 'stem from the feeling that hunter/gatherers are somehow second class citizens in comparison to farmers and that we must therefore see them as being more like farmers.'[71] This sentiment is echoed by Bowdler in claiming that Jones' view derives 'Its theoretical basis ... from eighteenth century "enlightenment", nineteenth century social Darwinism, and twentieth century biogeography.'[72] A balanced view of these arguments was expressed by Lourandos. He noted that Horton's criticisms were not necessary incompatible with the accepted notion of fire-stick farming. Lourandos claimed that:

> Aboriginal burning practices may have been closely tied to natural fire regimes and perturbations in ecological stages of succession ... Aboriginal intervention in these ecological processes appears to have been both profitable and productive in an economic sense ... [the] main objection to Horton ... is that he assumes a passive role for people in these ecological events, largely ignoring their economic and broader socio-cultural roles.[73]

Lourandos proceeded to demonstrate long-term effects of Aboriginal burning upon vegetation.[74] Bill Gammage was another proponent of the theory of the conscious transformation of the Tasmanian landscape by Aborigines over millennia. He pointed to the rainforests at Mount Field and the Styx Valley, where they are overtopped by giant eucalypts, trees that cannot grow through rainforest, which is the climax vegetation in these areas. He noted that:

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[67] S. J. Pyne, *Burning Bush: A Fire History of Australia*, New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1991, p. 96.
[68] Bowdler, 'Fish and culture', p.338.
[69] D. R. Horton, 'The burning question', p. 249.
[70] p.238.
[71] p.248.
[72] Bowdler, 'Fish and culture', p.334.
[73] H. Lourandos, *Continent of Hunter-gatherers*, p.97.
[74] p. 48 et seq.

> Where eucalypts are, rainforest was cleared of, not once by a bushfire ... but by deliberate, repeated fires ... To change rainforest to grassland took no small persistence.[75]

A further indication of Aboriginal technology with a bearing on anthropogenic firing is recorded by Plomley from Robinson's journals, when he noted the 'considerable knowledge of the signs of the weather' based on observations of the Moon, stars and sky.[76] This knowledge of likely wind patterns would be of vital importance in the use of fire.

In summary, the Tasmanians' use of fire would seem to have been purposeful and advantageous and, over millennia, to have had an ecological effect on specific plant communities. Whether anthropogenic firing had a significant long-term effect on the whole environment remains an open question. The use of the expression 'fire-stick farming' is probably best avoided, given the Social Darwinist implication that treating the hunter-gatherers as putative farmers placed them further up a scale of "civilization". As to the colonial observations of extensive firing, Horton pointed out that the ethnographic record from explorers and white settlers generally demonstrated only that fires were occurring, particularly where the observations were made from a distance or from sea, implying that many were naturally started, perhaps by lightning strike. However, there are many observations in Robinson's journals of deliberate firing by Aborigines, mostly for the reasons proposed by Jones.[77] On balance, the arguments supporting the purposeful use of fire by the Tasmanians are more persuasive.

Light that fire: firemaking by the Tasmanians

The issue of fire-making is equally contested. Ling Roth, in an early discussion of the issue, summarises the observations of the maritime explorers and early settlers where fire-making by friction and by percussion was noted.[78] In particular, he rejected the claim of James Calder that '[the aborigines] were ignorant of any method of procuring fire.'[79]

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[75] Bill Gammage, 'Landscapes Transformed', *Memory, monument and museums: the past in the present*, M. Lake (ed), Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 2006, pp. 155, 156.

[76] Brian Plomley, 'Contacts with the Tasmanian Aborigines' *Windows on Meteorology*, E.K. Webb (ed), Melbourne: CSIRO Publishing, 1997, p.43. Note also Knopwood's observations in chapter two.

[77] Horton, 'The burning question', p.246; Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* pp. 249, 250 , for example.

[78] H. Ling Roth, *The Aborigines of Tasmania*, Halifax: F. King & Sons, 1899, pp. 83, 84. Observations of fire making materials, such as 'flints' and tinder, observed during the Cook. Bligh and d'Entrecasteaux expeditions.

[79] Roth, p.83. Calder actually wrote 'That [the Aborigine] was ignorant of any artificial means of procuring fire may be traced to the nature of the woods of his country ... which are nearly as hard as whin-stone, and

However, Calder's opinion received strong support from Plomley when, in discounting Robinson's observations of Aboriginal fire-making using percussive methods, he stated 'The Tasmanians seem to have had no artificial means of producing fire.'[80] Plomley gave no supporting evidence for this statement, but noted the numerous observations of Aborigines carrying firesticks, even on watercraft, so that fire making was unnecessary. Jones reiterated Plomley's claim on two occasions without offering any evidence.[81] Against this, a further colonial observation of Aboriginal ability to make fire came from Jorgenson, who claimed that [the Tasmanians] were acquainted with the mode of procuring fire by friction ...'[82] His claim related to fire making by *friction*, a method not supported by any substantive evidence apart from the one recorded observation below.

A challenge to the thesis that Tasmanian's were incapable of fire making came from Gisela Volger in 1973. She noted the observations of Furneaux, Bligh and Labillardiere during their respective expeditions, where flint-like stones and tinder were found together. She pointed out that, although flint does not exist in Tasmania 'It is probably also possible to strike fire with chert and iron ores ... There are many flakes and spalls ... which sometimes show traces of use and of fire.'[83] In addition, an analysis of the Bruny Island language indicated a differentiation between the words used for normal stone (loina, poata) and stone with 'a resemblance of a flint ... (myrer)'. In view of the explorers' observations, the linguist evidence and the observations of Robinson, Volger concluded that 'the percussion technique was the Tasmanian method of lighting fire.'[84] The issue was also canvassed by Beth Gott in 2002, describing the four known methods of Aboriginal fire making in Australia – by percussion using flint; by fire-drill; by the 'saw' method; and by fire-plough – the last three constituting the 'friction' method. Only one observation of the fire-plough had been noted in Tasmania – that of Ventenat, the naturalist on the d'Entrecasteaux expedition of 1792-1793. The other observations by the

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not very inflammable either, so that no amount of manual friction could possibly ignite them.' J. E. Calder, *Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits, &c., of the Native Tribes of Tasmania*, Hobart: Henn & Co., 1875, pp. 31, 32. Facsimile ed., Fullers Bookshop, Hobart, 1972. This comment is somewhat less than a complete denial.

[80] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p.225.

[81] R. Jones, 'The Tasmanian Paradox', p.197; R. Jones, 'Hunting Forbears' *The Flow of Culture*, p. 30.

[82] Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land*, ,p.56. Jorgenson proceeded to describe fire making by friction with two pieces of wood, but did not claim having any direct observation of the practice.

[83] G. Volger, 'Making Fire by Percussion in Tasmania', *Oceania*, vol. 44, 1973, pp. 60, 61.

[84] p.61.

maritime explorers were of flint-like stone and tinder materials.[85] No direct observations of fire-making were recorded.[86] Gott noted that Plomley, in rejecting any ability of the Tasmanians to make fire, largely relied on a single report by Robinson who, while on the *Friendly Mission* in 1831, had enquired of Aborigines in the south-west as to what occurred if their fire-sticks were extinguished. He was told 'they were compelled to eat the kangaroo raw and to walk about and look for another mob and get fire from them.'[87] Gott concluded that the Tasmanians did know how to make fire, but that it was a difficult skill to practice in the 'damp Tasmanian climate'; and that the methods employed were by percussion in the south-east, and most likely by fire plough and drill in other places.[88] Given the ethnohistorical observations of the maritime explorers and early settlers, Gott's conclusion appears a reasonable assumption, apart from the lack of all but one observation of the friction method.

How it all began: the cosmology of the Tasmanians

Sahlins' picture of a happy and full life outside economic constraints is in stark contrast to the economic homeostatic (even regressed) existence of the Tasmanians as pictured by Jones, where any 'religious ceremonies' were of a utilitarian nature such as the disposing of the dead, or 'transitory social events'.[89] Jones based his conclusions on the ethnohistorical observation of the French maritime explorers and particularly on the observations of George Augustus Robinson during the *Friendly Mission.* Plomley claimed 'the Tasmanian aborigines lacked the highly organised sacred life of the Australian aborigines, which was identified with the spirit of place.'[90] David Horton pointed out that, to the contrary, Robinson for one did indeed note extensive communal activity in his journals; however, Robinson's religious prejudices influenced him in describing these ceremonies as 'play' or 'hilarity'. Horton listed numerous examples recorded by Robinson of ceremonies over extended time periods, including dances, story-telling, corroborees, hunting ceremonies, and a 'sting-ray ritual'; a Bruny Island homage to thunder, lightning and fire; numerous references to 'devils' and 'evil spirits'; and most

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[85] Furneaux, for example, stated 'In [a hut on the Derwent estuary] there was the stone they strike fire with, and tinder made of bark ...'James Cook, 'Captain Furneaux's Narrative ...', *A Voyage Towards the South Pole and Round the World ...*, London: Strahan and Cadell, 1777, p. 113.
[86] B. Gott, 'Fire-Making in Tasmania: Absence of Evidence Is Not Evidence of Absence', *Current Anthropology*, vol. 43, no. 4, Aug-Oct 2002, p.650.
[87] Quoting Robinson, p.652.
[88] p.655. An observation that would accord with Calder's view.
[89] Jones , 'The Tasmanian Paradox', p. 201.
[90] Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* p. 967.

notoriously, a dance ritual involving the depiction of a rider on horseback.[91] These observations and the question of the Tasmanians' cosmology and spirituality are discussed more fully in chapter two. The abandonment of scaled fish from the Tasmanian diet perhaps also suggests a religious aspect of Tasmanian culture. Horton speculated that

> the prohibition against fish eating, which developed in response to hardship, became a part of the storm/sea/fire ritual complex[92]

Bowdler also speculated that:

> A cosmology may have been erected to sustain this apparently aberrant decision, which spread to other parts of Tasmania where fishing was ... of little importance.[93]

Ling Roth's summary of ethnographic observations and commentary on any religious beliefs of the Tasmanians ranged from the unsupported opinion of James Bonwick that "" Druidical Rites were not unknown in Tasmania"' to William Breton who claimed that ""They do not appear to have any rites or ceremonies, religious or otherwise."'[94] Roth stated that the legends of the Tasmanians

> proved ... their belief in a host of malevolent spirits and mischievous goblins, whose abodes were caverns and dark recesses of the dense forests, clefts in rocks on mountain tops, etc.[95]

Roth also noted that James Backhouse, whose Quaker religion made him 'a person likely to have made good inquiries as to their beliefs... considered "[the Aborigines] still attribute the strong emotions of their minds to the devil ..."' and that Thomas Dove, the one-time catechist at the Wybalenna settlement on Flinders Island, claimed that:

> Two customs of a superstitious kind are still retained among them; neither ... bearing the slightest reference to even low and misguided views of religious homage.[96]

These opinions and observations, and others summarised by Roth, are those of educated Englishmen, some of whom, like the Reverend Dove, were of a firm religious persuasion. Their Eurocentric views on religion and morality are summed up in Dove's statement above. They were not seeing nor seeking any of the myths and rituals associated with country, as observed by A. P. Elkin, Donald Thomson, and many other twentieth century anthropologists. Several had undertaken the role of "civilizing" a people they considered

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[91] D. Horton, 'Tasmanian adaptation', *Mankind*, vol. 12, no.1, 1979, pp. 32, 33. See also Julia Clark, 'Devils and Horses: Religious and Creative Life in Tasmanian Aboriginal Society', M. Roe (ed), *The Flow of Culture: Tasmanian Studies*, Canberra: Australian Academy of the Humanities, 1988, pp. 50-72. The 'horse dance' ceremony is a stark example of cultural adaptation, as discussed under,

[92] D. R. Horton , 'Tasmanian adaptation', pp. 31, 32.

[93] S. Bowdler, 'Fish and culture: a Tasmanian polemic', *Mankind*, vol. 12, no.4, December, 1980, p.339.

[94] pp.53, 57.

[95] Roth, *The Aborigines of Tasmania*, p. 55.

[96] p. 56.

savage and on the lowest rung of the ladder of civilization. In opposition to those opinions Milligan, in his *Vocabulary*, detailed the 'Legend of the Origin of Fire ... as related by a Native of the Oyster Bay Tribe.' The legend records the journey of two men and two women into the sky as stars. Milligan also recorded Aboriginal words for 'Demon (Mieginya, Ria warrawah noilé)', 'Fiend (Winnya, Winneluaghabaru)', 'Spirit of the dead (Wurrawena, Warrawah)' and 'Spirit of evil, of the devil (Mieng-inya, Namma)' – words from the *Mairremmenener*, *Nuennone*, *Lyluequonny* and *Mellerkerdee* languages.[97] The work of Milligan (who had a good knowledge of some Tasmanian languages) suggested a close association of beliefs with the land, and many of the observations made by George Augustus Robinson of ceremonies and storytelling carried the same connotation. Robinson was also a religious Englishman – an evangelical – with rigid religious ideas, and dismissive of all Aboriginal spirituality. For example, while at the Prosser River in October 1831, Robinson sought information from Kickerterpoller (Black Tom or Tom Birch) on the location of the district's Aborigines. Tom asked Mannalargenna to consult 'his devil'. The 'consultation' was apparently unsuccessful, and Robinson noted that:

> I did not treat their superstition with the contempt I should do had I not been engaged in this anxious enterprise. Was therefore willing to indulge them in their *whims*, hoping thereby to succeed, as for their own credit they would find them out.[98]

This note indicates a firmly-closed mind, at least on the subject of beliefs, without any inclination to inquire further. On a prior occasion, at the Little Piper River in the north east, Robinson, in dismissing a 'chief's' [sic] consultation with his devil noted that 'I had much rather he had dispensed with his spell, as it filled me with horror, and I took occasion to divert him from this satanic delusion.'[99] Again, Robinson's intolerance is self-evident. However, he demonstrated a great deal more patience on 7 July 1831, when Woorrady (of the *Nuennone* or Bruny Island band) 'gave in very full detail the traditional account [of] how and where the first black man came from.'[100] Woorrady described how the rivers and islands were made, and the animals created, and the dwelling place of spirits and devils – 'plenty of devils dwelt at the TOOGEE LOW [Port Davey].'[101] This is

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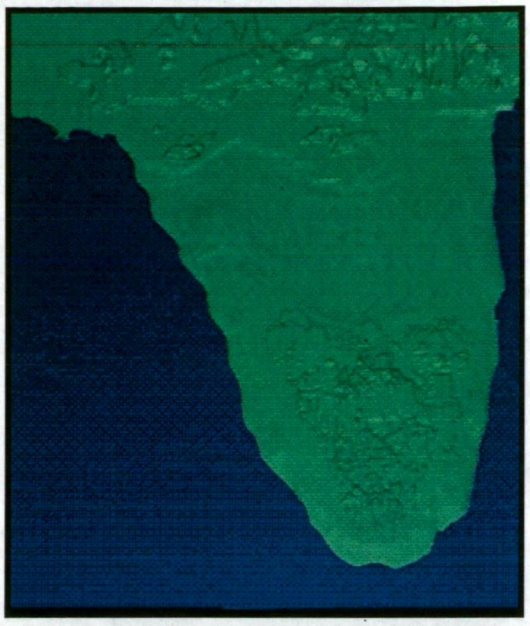
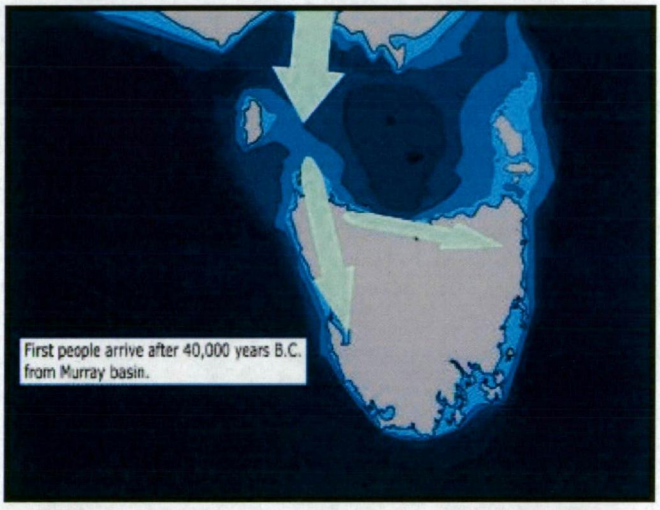
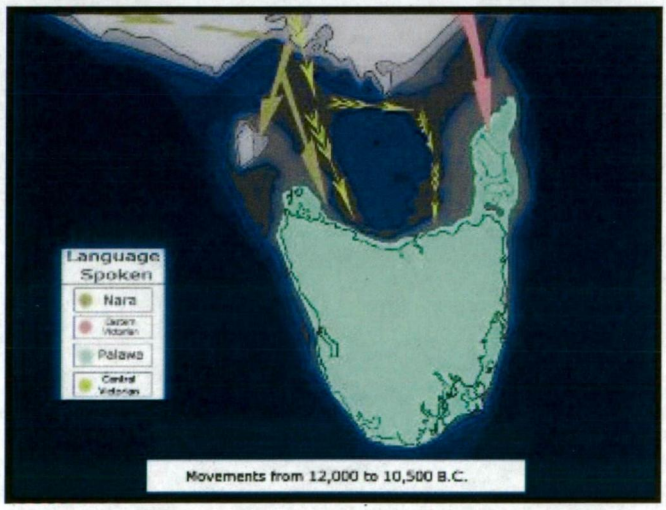
[97] Joseph Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Dialects of Some of the Aboriginal Tribes of Tasmania,* pp.13, 14, 22, 26, 44.
[98] Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* p. 493. My emphasis.
[99] p. 414.
[100] p. 373. However, it should be noted that Woorrady had spent a considerable time in Robinson's company, and no doubt had been subjected to Bible readings, including some from *Genesis.*
[101] p.373.



1. The Bassian Plain c.35,000 BP



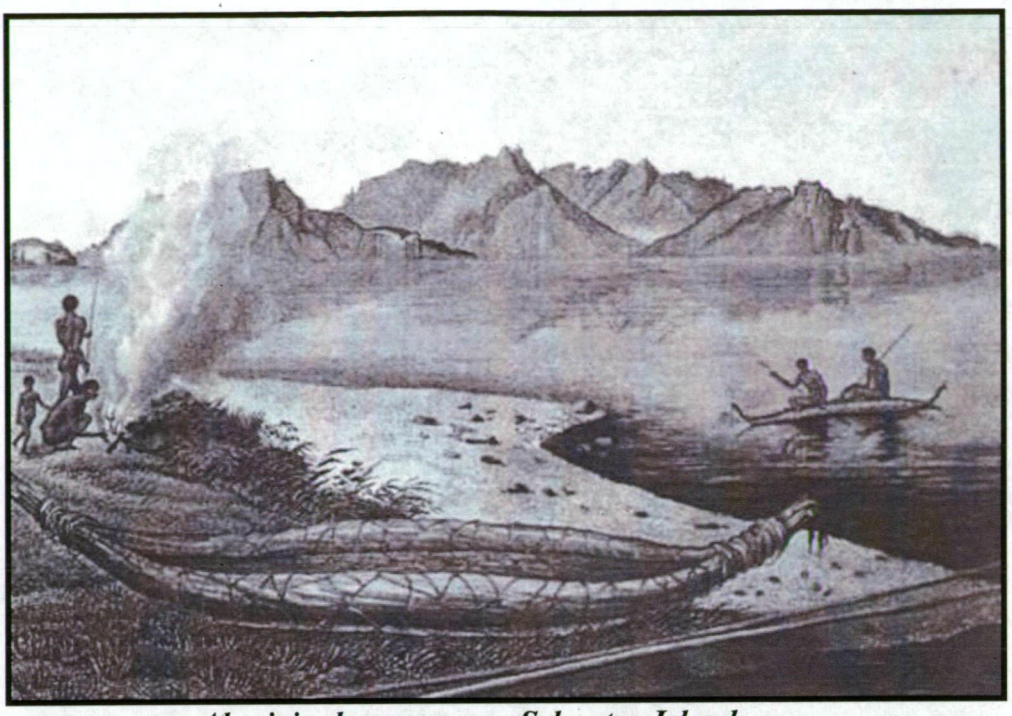
2. First migrations before inundation



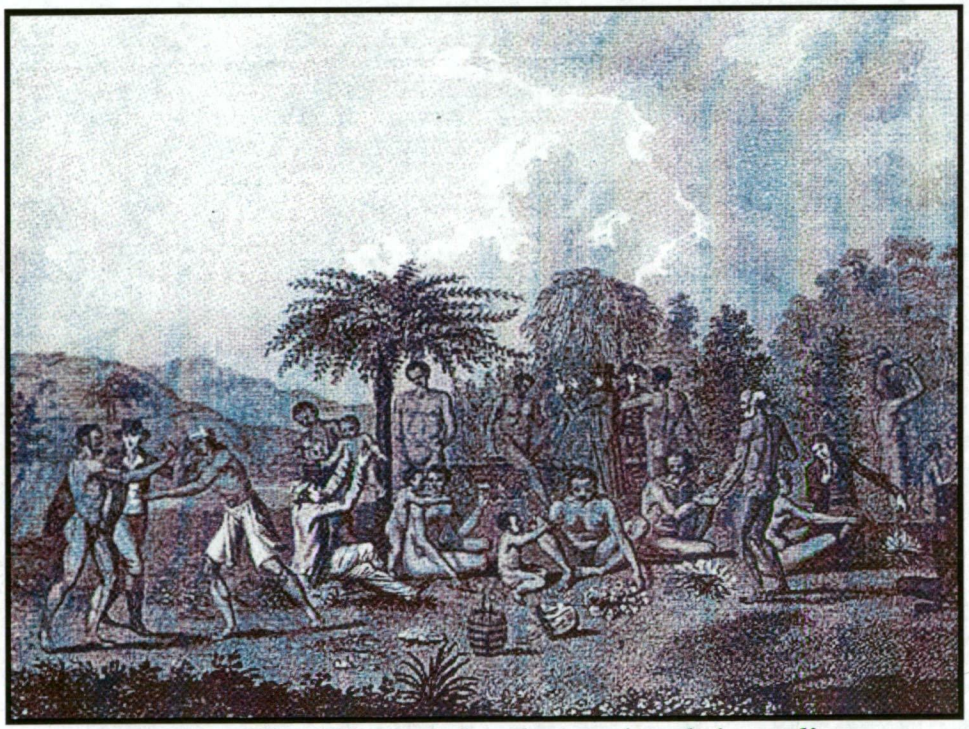
3. Subsequent migrations

Aboriginal migrations across the Bassian Plain, 35,000 BP – 10,000 BP

Source: D. Patterson, 2006, after J. Taylor, unpublished PhD thesis (incomplete), University of Tasmania, 2006.



Aboriginal canoes near Schouten Island
(Terre de Diemen, navigation, vue de la cote orientale de Ile le Schouten)
Charles-Alexandre Lesueur
Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, State Library of Tasmania



'Savages of Van Diemen's Land preparing their meal'
Piron, from *Voyage in search of La Perouse*, vol. 2, Plates Pl. no.V
Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, State Library of Tasmania

Skittleball Hill (Platform Bluff), Central Plateau,Tasmania

Photo: G. K. Calder, February 2007

***Eucalyptus gunii* subsp. *divaricata* – the Miena Cider tree**
showing tapping scar. Skittleball Hill (Platform Bluff), near Lake Fergus
Photo: G.K.Calder, February 2007

a profound myth, redolent of creation myths in any age. Its association with particular places – rivers, coastlines, islands, valleys – had parallels to creation myths relating to 'country' on mainland Australia. Its geographical association was Tasmania-wide – Bruny Island to Port Davey – reflecting McBryde's view of mainland cultural landscapes:

> Long distance exchange and social, ceremonial linkages [which] are a feature of Aboriginal Australia. The continent is overlain by a matrix of such networks, often continent-wide, binding individuals and societies.[102]

The *Nuenonne* (Bruny Island People) were known to have an affinity with the *Needwonnee* (Port Davey People). On 9 July 1829, Robinson recorded the presence of nine *Needwonnee* on Bruny Island – three men, three women and three children. He noted that 'The joy exhibited on both sides was unbounded and fully indicative of the affection they felt towards each other.'[103] The overland route taken by Robinson from Hobart to Port Davey on the first leg of the *Friendly Mission* followed 'the track of the natives', the first of the many times Robinson adopted the Aboriginal road to achieve his objectives.[104] Given these facts, it seems a reasonable assumption that the same long distance exchange and ceremonial linkages that existed on the mainland also existed in Tasmania, and were directly related to and were part of the spiritual and ceremonial life of the Tasmanians. The discussion under of the particular long distance roads of the *Mairremmener* will highlight that issue.

The review of Jones' opinion on the absence of a comprehensive cosmology and spirituality among the Tasmanian bands indicates that he was in error: they had developed such beliefs, as detailed in chapter two.

Going to sea: the expansion of the Tasmanians' universe

A further issue on the question of technological adaptation versus cultural regression is that of the Tasmanians' ability to construct and use sea craft. Again, the observations of the maritime explorers and the early settlers were conclusive evidence of the Tasmanians' skills in both 'catamaran' (canoe) building and seamanship.[105] Joseph Raoul, the pilot of the ship *Recherche* on the d'Entrecasteaux expedition in 1792-1793,

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[102] McBryde, 'Travellers in Storied Landscapes', p. 157.
[103] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 65.
[104] p.114.
[105] A contrary report was given by Furneaux, who stated 'what is remarkable, we never saw the least marks either of a canoe or boat, and it is generally thought they have none.' Cook, "Captain Furneaux's narrative', p.114.

described a 'boat' propelled by a long pole. Piron, the artist on the expedition, drew one such vessel.[106] The reports of Peron and Freycinet of the Baudin expedition in 1802 precisely described the canoes, made from bundles of bark bound together and drawn at each end into a prow. They were approximately three metres long and one metre wide. The illustrations accompanying the reports showed a relatively simple craft with two propelling poles.[107] In March 1830, during the *Friendly Mission*, Robinson described a similar craft, 'a large catamaran about ten feet long ...' used to travel to a small island in Port Davey.[108] However, he also described a much simpler log raft used for river crossings.[109] Given the large number of islands off the whole of the Tasmanian coastline and the extensive archaeological evidence of Aboriginal use of them, the development of seaworthy craft able to navigate the sometimes treacherous waters of the Southern Ocean, Bass Strait and the Tasman Sea is a tribute to the skill of the Tasmanians. For example, in 1801 Matthew Flinders noted that 'Men either reside upon [De Witt's Isles], or visit these isles from the main: for the vegetation upon two of them had been lately burnt.'[110] De Witt Island lies in the Southern Ocean, over six kilometres from the mainland. A further example is that of the stone artefacts present on the Ile des Phoques, twelve kilometres off Schouten Island on the east coast. Steve Brown, in noting this and similar archaeological evidence on Maatsuyker Island, the Ile du Nord and particularly Maria Island, stated that 'it appears watercraft were in common use in Eastern Tasmania at the time of European contact.' The dating of middens on these islands from about 2500 BP supports arguments that the 'Aboriginal Tasmanian world [expanded] to include offshore islands at about that time.'[111]

Adaptive, homeostatic or regressive?

The sum of these issues – the probable existence of a Tasmanian cosmology and spirituality, including food prohibition; the adaptation of a toolkit suited to food quest and the environment; the use of fire and the methods of fire making; and the development of technology such as boat building and seamanship in order to expand their universe supports the thesis of technological and cultural development and adaptation by the

[106] Plomley, *The General,* pp.267, 268.
[107] Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition,* pp.131 facing, 146 facing, 192, 193.
[108] Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* p. 136.
[109] 160.
[110] Matthew Flinders, *Observations on the Coasts of VanDiemen's Land* ... London: John Nicholls, 1801, p.3.
[111] Brown, *Aboriginal Archaeological Sites in Eastern* Tasmania, p. 48.

Tasmanians rather than regression. It particularly points to resource adaptation by the nomadic hunter-gather societies on the island. It also supports the thesis that "civilization" is a Western construct; many societies, quite capable of adaptation, chose a lifestyle suited to and in maintenance of their environment. This was certainly the case with the *Mairremmener* – the Oyster Bay and Big River People – who, after suffering acculturation at the hands of the British invaders proved readily able to assimilate those aspects of an alien culture which suited their lifestyle; for example, the notable adaptation of vital importance – the use of European dogs for hunting. In the section that follows, a powerful cultural trait of the Tasmanians – the establishment of 'cultural roads' and the relationship of these roads to the nomadic lifestyle of the *Mairremmener* in particular – is discussed, and provides a further indication of the dynamism of Tasmanian Aboriginal societies. As Colin Pardoe noted,

> it is important to avoid naïve theories of determinism which attempt to give chronological or causal precedence to one sphere. It is only by demonstrating the dynamic interaction among all aspects of archaeological data (be they stone tools, site distributions, plant and animal remains, or human skeletons) and attempting to integrate them within a coherent model that we can arrive at unified theories of prehistory.[112]

In recovering the prehistory of a people, the 'dynamic integration' of anthropological, linguistic and ethnographic theories and observations with the archaeological data also provides coherence to the model.

Pathways to paradise: the nomadic 'roads'

Roads to religion: long distance cultural exchange

The ability to communicate is a measure of man's societal development. As Hugh Duncan pointed out, 'Society arises in, and continues to exist through, the communication of significant symbols.'[113] The use of language as a medium of communication is in itself insufficient to promote the growth and development of a society, especially if that society remains closed within a finite socio-linguistic group. Homeostasy would be the inevitable result. There must be a channel of communication between groups, and the first and perhaps the most historically important channel was that of the *road.* The road provided the means of cultural exchange, whether through the medium of language or by other codes (smoke signals, drumming, whistling). The

[112] C. Pardoe, 'Isolation and evolution in Tasmania', p.12.
[113] H. D. Duncan, 'The Search for a Social Theory of Communication', *Human Communication Theory: Original Essays*, F.E.X. Dance (ed), New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1967, p.

existence of the road as a transmitter of cultural messages and exchange is as far removed into prehistory as the existence of *Homo sapiens sapiens* himself, and even his predecessors. The association of the nomadic hunter-gatherer with the road is axiomatic – regular migrations along fixed routes were the markers of the nomad, for cultural reasons beyond the economic imperatives of hunting and gathering. This is not to deny the economic importance of the nomadic road. Food quest demanded that routes be established between known sites of resources, especially along the littoral, providing access to both maritime and terrestrial foods. In Tasmania, seasonal migrations for certain foods took place such as the gathering of swans' eggs from lakes and lagoons – Moulting Lagoon on the east coast of Tasmania being one example previously referred to – and the gathering of penguins' eggs along the north-east coast.[114] In addition, these economic routes enabled access to other resources – to stone quarries for tool making;[115] to ochre mines for recovering that valued symbolic and decorative mineral;[116] and for the purpose of trade between groups.

In Aboriginal Australia, the road assumed an all-of-culture importance. John Mulvaney, in reviewing anthropological studies on long distance contact between Aboriginal peoples, noted that

> some form of reciprocal gift exchange occurred in every area studied. While the early observers were correct to emphasise the economic aspects of such transactions, the social and ritualised elements cannot be denied ... the occasion ... was more significant than the gift or donor.[117]

Isabel McBryde pointed to 'cultural landscapes' – trading routes that existed in Central Australia with social and ritual as well as economic purposes.[118] They were tracks or paths encompassing myth and ritual, embodied in the stories entrusted to the tribal elders. Thus the roads became 'storylines', determining

> a person's "dreaming",[and] so [were] fundamental to personal and group identity ... The extent of these storylines and associated exchange networks is measured in thousands of kilometres. They are among the world's most extensive systems of human communication recorded in hunter-gatherer societies.[119]

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[114] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 382.
[115] H. Lourandos, *Coast and Hinterland,* pp. 60-70 – the stone quarry at Crown Lagoon, for example.
[116] Robinson, in a letter to the Colonial Secretary on 25 January 1833, claimed that 'The BR [Big River] and Oyster Bay Tribes were in the constant practice of visiting this district [Mt. Housetop] for the purpose of procuring this colouring [ochre].' The other area frequently visited was the Gog Range. *Friendly Mission,* p. 688. Also pp. 582, 599, 600.
[117] D. J. Mulvaney, 'The chain of connection', *Tribes and Boundaries in Australia*, p. 75.
[118] McBryde, 'The cultural landscapes of Aboriginal long-distance exchange systems: can they be confined within our heritage registers?', *Historic Environment*, Vol. 13, Nos. 3 & 4, 1997, p.9.
[119] I. McBryde, 'Travellers in storied landscapes: a case study in exchanges and heritage', *Aboriginal History*, vol.24, 2000, p.158.

Evidence of such roads – the 'storylines' outlined by Mulvaney and McBryde[120] – exists in respect of the Tasmanians. It is found in the journals of Robinson and Jorgenson in particular, and in the reports of other settlers, all of whom observed the dancing, storytelling and the long-distance travel over established pathways – the nomadic roads.

***From the mountains to the sea: the cultural roads of the* Mairremenner**

The existence of well-established Aboriginal roads was noted by the maritime explorers. La Billardiere, the botanist on the d'Entrecasteux expedition, recorded in his journal the details of an excursion into the hinterland from Rocky Bay, from 1-4 February 1793. The going was very hard, the party 'being obliged to overcome the obstacles which were opposed to us at every step ...'[121] On the return journey the party resolved to follow the coast in an endeavour to find easier going. They found a road 'though so difficult, was however frequented by the natives.' As Plomley pointed out, this road, following the coastline at South Cape Bay, was probably that used by Robinson at the beginning of the *Mission* in 1830.[122] Members of the Baudin expedition of 1802 used Aboriginal 'pathways' to gain access to features they wished to observe. When searching for fresh water in the d'Entrecasteaux Channel, Leschenault de la Tour came across a small stream along which 'we saw footpaths, burnt trees and the remains of shellfish.'[123] This description is consistent with the nature of economic roads; that is, those used for food quest.

With the British colonization of Tasmania, observations of the Aboriginal roads were not only frequently noted: the roads were used by the colonists themselves for access to desired parts of the island. As Jones observed:

> Aboriginal roads and major routes of travel can be detected in many parts of Tasmania, not only by the present road pattern which was often superimposed onto the old one but also by studies of the forest succession that has been significantly altered by the aboriginal use of fire in keeping certain routes open.[124]

While the early settlers rarely recorded the origins of the tracks used, the journals of early explorers, surveyors and settlers provide some evidence of the use of Aboriginal roads. For example, Lieutenant Thomas Laycock made the first overland journey between Port

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[120] pp. 157, 158.
[121] Plomley, *The General, op. cit.* p. 256.
[122] pp.256, 257.
[123] Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition,* p. 133.
[124] Jones, 'Tasmanian Tribes' in Tindale, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia,* p.321.

Dalrymple (Launceston) and Hobart in February 1807. The route taken by his party followed the Lake River onto the lower part of the Central Plateau, and then passed through the present site of Bothwell to the Derwent River, which was followed downstream to Herdsman's Cove. A boat then took the party on to Hobart.[125] Laycock did not refer to the use of any Aboriginal track or road; however, the routes taken by him onto the Plateau and the route south to the Derwent were well-established Aboriginal routes used by later explorers and settlers, as detailed under. When Surveyor-General Charles Grimes examined the line of road later in 1807, he adjusted the Laycock route to avoid the climb onto the Plateau.[126] No direct acknowledgement of the source of the new line of this road was made; however, the demotic names of places *en route* gave an indication of their Aboriginal origin. Blackmans River on the Saltpan Plains, the approximate halfway point, is one example.[127] As John West pointed out, 'Every mountain, valley, and river, is distinguished and named [by the Aborigines]. The English have often been indebted to these primitive surveyors, for guidance through the forests which they came to divide.'[128] Yet these names were seldom adopted by the settlers and the explorers and surveyors: quite the contrary. Governor Macquarie, during his second visit to Van Diemen's Land in 1822, made a point of naming (and sometimes, renaming) numerous places, townships and landmarks with English names along the new line of road between Launceston and Hobart.[129]

While not referring to a defined 'road' or path, Beamont's journal of his 'tour to the Western Mountains' in December 1817, described

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[125] *HRA*, Series III, vol. I, pp.745, 746.
[126] pp. 669, 671, 842n.
[127] Map 2, 'Chart of Van Diemen's Land ...' *Lachlan Macquarie, Governor of New South Wales: Journals of His Tours in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land 1810-1822*, Sydney: Library of Australian History, 1979, facing p. 202.
[128] John West, *The History of Tasmania*, A.G.L. Shaw (ed), Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1971, p.273.
[129] *Lachlan Macquarie ... Journals of His Tours ...*, pp. 192-194. The surveys and the preparation of maps were aimed at creating a 'new human geography', the means of managing the dispossession of the original owners. Calder, in notes written on early east coast settler John deCourcy Harle, claimed,

> It is to the refined tastes of this old settler, that we are indebted for many of the silly names that disgrace our maps of the East Coast. It was he who first called the odious ravine through which the Prosser River flows to the sea, 'Paradise'; Hell's Gates, somewhere near Buxton; the Devil's Royals; Thunderbolt; the Burst:My:Gall and Breakneck hills, are also said to be of his coinage, ... 'Nowhere-Else' and some other euphonious names are specimens of his talents for rudely descriptive in geographical nomenclature.[129]

The use of both demotic and approved names began upon settlement, and continued throughout the whole of the nineteenth century.

> some very fine plains, the Shannon taking its course through them [St. Patrick's Plains}; observed a number of Trees ... from which the natives get a liquid like cyder ... many of these trees have been destroyed in consequence ...[130]

These plains were along the route followed by Robinson during the *Friendly Mission* in 1831, and he observed the same trees.[131] The route was also followed by Deputy Surveyor-General Evans in 1820, when exploring the lower parts of the Central Plateau. Evans noted that 'From Mr. Lord's Stockeeper's Hutt at the Doe [Clyde] River, there is a path leading to a Stream called the Shannon.'[132] In March 1825, J. H. Wedge, an experienced assistant surveyor with the Land Survey Department, followed Laycock's route along the Lake River onto the Central Plateau. He then travelled along the western shore of the Great Lake, through generally heavy going, but finding passages such as 'an open gladeway about 10 Chains [200 metres] & a Mile in length' and 'an open space on the top of the Hill which continued for about two miles to the edge of the tier'.[133] This particularly locality, on the Pine, Little Pine and Nive Rivers, was the home of the *Lairmairremener* (the Big River People), and Wedge's description of 'gladeways' and 'open spaces' is consistent with the Aboriginal method of clearing pathways by burning. James Ross, writing in the *Hobart Town Almanack* of 1830, described the road following the east bank of the Clyde River from Bothwell south to Jericho, and noted that 'the remarkable eminences called the Quoin and the Table mountain, near Jericho, [are] places of great resort for the black natives.'[134] This road, also used by Laycock, is later fully described by Robinson during the *Friendly Mission*, and again was the country of the *Lairmairremner*.

All the above accounts indicate the use made of the Aboriginal roads by early settlers and surveyors, and many of these roads became accepted routes between the settled areas. However, the most extensive use of these well-established paths was, as previously noted, made by George Augustus Robinson during the *Friendly Mission.* No calculation has been made of the distance covered by Robinson from January 1830 to August 1834, but he circumambulated the whole island and crisscrossed the interior on a

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[130] 'Copy of Mr. Beamont's Journal taken on his Tour to the Western Mountains, Van Diemen's Land, Monday, 1st Decr., 1817', *HRA*, Series III, Vol. III, p. 587.
[131] Robinson, *Friendly Mission, op. cit.*, p.556. Oyster Bay woman *Woolertoopinneya* called the road *Markomenya.*
[132] 'Memo by G. W. Evans', *HRA*, Series III, Vol. III, p. 590.
[133] G. Crawford, W. Ellis & G. H. Stancombe (eds), *The Diaries of John Helder Wedge 1824-1835*, Hobart: Royal Society of Tasmania, 1962, p.14,
[134] P. L. Brown (ed). *Clyde Company Papers, Vol. 1: Prologue 1821-1835*, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1941, p.47.

number of occasions in his search for the remnant bands of Tasmanians, travelling many thousands of miles. It was an unparalleled feat of exploration only accomplished by virtue of two factors: first, by the assistance of a number of Aborigines with whom he had developed a close association, learning their languages and gaining their trust; and secondly, by the use of the Aboriginal roads, many of which were known to his travelling companions. Apart from the Midlands, the topography of Van Diemen's Land was rugged in the extreme, and impassable or inaccessible in places, but the Aboriginal roads enabled Robinson to achieve his objectives. In his journals there are hundreds of references to 'native roads' or 'paths', some well-beaten tracks[135], others marked by the notching of trees along the route[136], and again others defined by the use of fire.[137] This latter method was preferred by the bands of the north-east, where Robinson found few beaten paths, but found evidence of the wide use of fire to provide access.[138]

Three great highways: the prime roads in the cultural landscape

Of all the Aboriginal roads located and used by Robinson, three in particular appeared to carry more significance to the *Mairremmener* than merely providing access to areas of economic importance. While at Oatlands prior to heading to the Central Plateau in November 1831, Robinson noted that:

> The natives have three roads from the Big River [the Ouse], one by Pittwater, one by Jericho and another in the direction of the Macquarie.[139]

The first road 'by Pittwater' probably followed the valley of the Coal River. Evidence, albeit hearsay, that bands came together along this route is provided by Robinson when he recorded, on 29 March 1832, an observation by George Earl, a Macquarie River settler, that 'he had seen as many as five hundred in one mob together, i.e. the Coal River mob.'[140] The band occupying the territory along the Coal River probably amounted to fifty individuals whose territory 'extended from Lake Tiberias ... in the north to Pitt Water in the south.'[141] The report of this much larger gathering is another indication of

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[135] *Friendly Mission, op. cit.* p.517: 'Where those beaten tracks commence ...'
[136] p. 516: 'the natives had notched the trees ...'
[137] pp. 372, 488.
[138] *Friendly Mission,* p. 388. '... the Brune [sic] natives say that they [Aborigines at the Boobyalla River] don't keep one road like them, but roam about in different directions.'
[139] p. 497.
[140] p. 595. A group of five hundred would appear to be an exaggeration.
[141] S. Brown, *Aboriginal Archaeological Resources in South East Tasmania*, Hobart: National Parks and Wildlife Service, April, 1986, p.88, following R. Jones. Plomley identifies this band as the *Portmairremener*, *Friendly Mission, op. cit.* p. 974.

the movement of agglomerated bands at specific times, heading westerly along established routes onto the Central Plateau. The archaeological survey carried out by Steve Brown in 1986 at Colebrook Park and a further survey at Craigbourne Dam in 1991 identified numerous rock shelters and artefact scatters along the Coal River, from which Brown concluded that this area was an intermediate zone between the coast and the highland regions, a place of transient occupation along a route 'between areas required by social and ritual activities.'[142]

The second road, 'one by Jericho', is a route traced by Robinson on two separate journeys. The first, in January 1831, was a return journey southwards along the east coast to Hobart. Robinson turned inland at the Prosser River, and followed the course of that river to a ford (probably Devil's Royals Ford) five miles upstream, then south to Pitt Water.[143] He noted that this was 'The native road or *Markenner*'. An existing road (the "Old Convict Road") tracks the Prosser River at least as far as the ford. It is a well-constructed road with excellent dry-stone battering along the river bank. The mouth of the Prosser River is the location of extensive Aboriginal occupation. The archaeological study by Brown in 1991 revealed seventy-nine midden and artefact sites, from Luther Point to Pebbly Point just south of the river mouth.[144] Plomley recorded this area as the country of the *Laremairremener* people.[145] On a second journey in 1831, Robinson travelled along the course of the Prosser River to James Hobbs' farm at the Eastern Marshes, then north towards Oatlands, stopping south of the town (and north of Lake Tiberias) on 3 November 1831. This route suggested that the Aboriginal road followed the course of the Prosser River to its source, and then joined the Coal River Aboriginal road at a point north of Lake Tiberias. The conjoined roads then followed a line that approximated Beamont's and Evans' route to the Shannon River. Robinson's party, pushing further west from the Shannon, crossed the Ouse River north of Lake Echo, and finally met with the remnant Big River and Oyster Bay People at 'Platform Bluff' (Skittleball Hill) on the Little Pine River near Lake Fergus, on 31 December 1831. In his report to the Lieutenant- Governor, Robinson notes there were sixteen men, nine women and a child, 'accompanied by about 100 dogs.'[146] This meeting, and the subsequent

[142] pp. 87, 88; S. Brown, Aboriginal *Archaeological Sites in Eastern Tasmania*, p. 66.
[143] *Friendly Mission,* pp. 314,315.
[144] Brown, Occasional Paper no. 31, p. 49.
[145] *Friendly Mission,* p. 972.
[146] p. 570.

removal of these people to Flinders Island, signalled the end at that time of the cultural existence of the twenty or more bands of the *Mairremmener*–speaking people in Tasmania.

The location of the third road 'in the direction of the Macquarie River' is a matter of conjecture. Given that other roads followed major river valleys, and that Great Oyster Bay was a major source of marine resources for the several bands located at this northern edge of the country of the *Mairremmener* speakers, a route along the course of the Little Swanport River is a reasonable assumption.[147] The greatest number of coastal middens and artefact scatters along the eastern littoral is to be found at and around the Little Swanport River mouth. Pulleine, an early investigator, 'mention[ed] the extraordinary size of these middens in comparison to any others in Tasmania ... calling them "the phenomenal deposit" and "the most outstanding monument of the Tasmanian of the past."'[148] Inland, and forming part of the drainage area of the Little Swanport River, is the now-drained Crown Lagoon, subject of two archaeological investigations; firstly by Lourandos (1970) and then by Brown (1991)[149]. This site contains extensive artefact scatters, the tools showing signs of usage both for woodworking and food preparation. The archaeologists agree that this was a transient camp, although they differed upon the degree of transience. The site is proximate to the Lake Tiberias/Jericho area, and, as Lourandos pointed out, Robinson passed Crown Lagoon in October 1831, noting '"came to a marsh which ... was part of the Eastern Marshes ... Kickerterpoller said the natives hunted in these parts"' [150] A further archaeological study was carried out within the Buckland Military Training Area in 1998, the northern boundary of which is formed partly by the Little Swanport River. Tributary creeks and watercourses flowing north into this river proved to be the sources of quarries, artefact scatters and rock shelters. In particular, Pepper Creek demonstrated significant Aboriginal usage.[151] It would appear that this was the third river route from the coast to the Central Plateau, making a three-road convergence at Jericho. Interestingly, a present road tracks the course of the Little Swanport River (Inglewood Road/Swanston Road), terminating at Watch House Bay.

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[147] See Table 1. The bands included the *Linetemairrener, Mayyerlower, Loontitetermairrelehoinner, Karninghe* and *Poredareme,* from Great Swanport and Shouten Island south to Little Swanport.
[148] R. Pulleine quoted by H. Lourandos, *Coast and Hinterland,* p.30.
[149] Lourandos, *Coast and Hinterland*; Brown, *Aboriginal archaeological sites in Eastern Tasmania.*
[150] Robinson quoted in Lourandos, *Continent of Hunter-Gatherers,* p.60.
[151] *Buckland Military Training Area Environmental Management Plan,* Department of Defence Environmental Consortium, PPK, CMPS&F, December 1998, p. 75-88.

Another possible route for the third road may be the "Old Coach Road", running from Waters Meeting to Royal George. From the east coast this road follows the Swan River north to its source in the Fingal Tier, then follows the wide valleys of the St. Paul's and South Esk Rivers to the Lake River, an established access route onto the Central Plateau as demonstrated by Laycock's journey described above. Apart from the steep haul across the Tiers, the going along the river valleys is relatively easy and provided an excellent route for the settlers. However, as Brown pointed out, the St. Paul's/South Esk valley, and the Fingal valley to the north, both lay within marginal territory between the countries of the *Mairremmener,* the *Plangermairreenner* (Ben Lomond People), and the North Midlands and North-east Peoples, all of whom were, by the ethnographic record, bitter enemies and spoke different languages.[152] It is more likely that this route would be avoided and more southerly routes preferred.

A further possibility, and one for which Robinson's journals provide some support, is the Macquarie River Valley which also joins the Lake River and several other river valleys heading west onto the Central Plateau. The Tooms River, a Macquarie tributary, flows from what is now Tooms Lake, but which was a swamp before white settlement and the damming of the river. The present road follows the course of the Macquarie River from Ross through the Mount Morriston property and into the Diamond Tier. The Buxton River rises in this tier, and flows east to the east coast, just north of the mouth of the Little Swanport River. There is strong archaeological and ethnographic evidence of the use of the (now) Tooms Lake as a campsite, tool-making area and location for hunting and gathering.[153] On 21 October 1831, at the Macquarie River near Tooms Lake, Robinson 'saw burnt ground ... My natives assured me ... that the road we was travelling was the native road.'[154] While the route through the Diamond Tier is rugged and difficult, it is no more so than the more southerly route through the Eastern Tiers. An argument against this being the third route lies in the north-easterly heading of the Macquarie River – a direction away from the well-documented meeting place in the Oatlands/Jericho district, and into the country of the *Tyrrernotepanner* (North Midlands) People. While many of these bands spoke a *Mairremmener* dialect, their enmity towards

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[152] Brown, *Aboriginal Archaeological Sites in Eastern Tasmania,* p. 21; Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* pp. 421, 502, 545.
[153] Brown, *Aboriginal Archaeological Sites in Eastern Tasmania, op. cit.,* p. 65; Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* p. 487.
[154] Plomley, *Friendly Mission, op. cit.,* p. 488.

the Oyster Bay People has been noted above, making this route a less-attractive proposition.

Nomadic journeys of the Mairremmener*: the purpose of the cultural roads*

Large numbers of Aborigines were observed by settlers travelling in the areas which were covered by the roads leading to the Central Plateau. Jorgen Jorgenson, for example, noted in his *Narrative of the Habits, Manners, and Customs of the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land*, that:

> There is a part of the island, consisting of large plains, beyond the River Ouse in a north west direction, where the various tribes of the eastward and interior, used to meet in the month of November every year, there to hold a grand corrobory [sic] and to exhibit feats and to engage in certain sports in which they took a lively interest. Mr Jorgenson in 1829 thinking to fall in with them on the plains, himself headed one of his parties, and ordered two other of his roving bands to take a circuitous route, so as to meet nearly at the same time at Lake Fergus on the southern extreme of the plains. This year however the Blacks did not assemble at the usual place for fear of being surprised.[155]

This location coincides with the place where Robinson met the remnant Big River and Oyster Bay People in 1831. Three years earlier, in September 1826, Jorgenson had led a party across the Central Plateau in an endeavour to find a route to the Van Diemen's Land Company properties on the North West coast. On the Ouse River near Lake Fergus he reported 'a great number of Native huts, the inmates absent.'[156] Earlier again, in 1823, Dr. John Ross, while on an 'excursion' to Lake Echo from his property on the Clyde River, found:

> On the edge of this forest and on a gentle slope reaching down to the [Shannon] river ...a small group or village of Aboriginal huts ... we counted 17 of them. From the appearance of the fires we guessed they had been inhabited about a week before.[157]

As Jones estimated the numbers in a hearth group between two and eight people, probably sixty or more Aborigines may have been present at this 'village'. Ross had come across the campsite of a large band.[158] The earliest settler report of a large gathering of Aborigines was the well- known clash at Risdon Cove on 3 May 1804. Estimates of the numbers present at that place vary, three hundred appearing to be a consensus, with

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[155] Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land,* p. 68. While Jorgenson is sometimes regarded as an unreliable informant, Plomley notes that 'he was an intelligent observer of the Aborigines in their near natural state and one who was well versed in contemporary attitudes of the colonists towards them.' p. 41.

[156] J. Jorgenson, *Journal when on an Expedition of Discovery in Van Diemen's Land 2nd Septr 1826,* transcribed by Thomas Scott, Earlston, p. 66.

[157] *Dr Ross's Recollections of a short Excursion to Lake Echo in Van Diemen's Land 1823*, Hobart: Sullivan's Cove, 1992, p. 51.

[158] Jones, 'Tasmanian Tribes', in Tindale, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia,* p. 324. See also Jorgenson's comment in chapter two.

men women and children present.[159] A large gathering of that size would not have represented a hunting party.[160] It is possible, given the proximity of Risdon Cove to Pitt Water that the group had gathered for a late autumn return journey from the Central Plateau, and were acting in an inquisitive manner in travelling to the Cove.

The numerous reports of these large nomadic movements of Aborigines from the east coast to the Central Plateau have sometimes been explained as seasonal journeys on food quest. Lyndall Ryan described the Risdon Cove gathering as 'a kangaroo drive'.[161] This conclusion is in line with the earlier opinion of James Backhouse Walker, who, in notes attached to papers read to the Royal Society of Tasmania between 1888 and 1899 claimed:

> At certain seasons of the year ... large hunting parties were formed, in which the whole tribe, or possibly more than one tribe, joined forces to drive the game. Such was, doubtless, the gathering of the Oyster Bay natives at Risdon in 1804. [162]

Walker also stated:

> The natives were in the habit of visiting the coast in the winter, it is said between June and October ... Knopwood says that he had understood that the natives cross the country from east to west in the month of March; this would apply to the East Coast tribes only.[163]

Knopwood noted in his diaries that, at Brown's River near Kingston in October 1807,

> we see a great many of the natives in the same place ... The women and children were together and the men out a-hunting. At 5 p.m. they returned and they all came among us, between 250 and 300. They were all very friendly ...[164]

In another paper, Ryan noted that 'Many Big River mobs spent the winter on the east coast where food resources were more reliable and then moved back to their own country for the summer.'[165] This view is supported by Therese Kemp who stated that 'The east coast bands or hordes were nomads, migrating along the coast during the winter months

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[159] See for example, L. Ryan, 'Risdon Cove and the Massacre of 3 May 1804: Their Place in Tasmanian History', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, vol. 9, 2004, p. 115. Full historiography in Appendix 3.
[160] Surgeon Mountgarret, writing to the Rev. Robert Knopwood, claimed 'I have every reason to think [the attack] was premeditated, as their number farr [sic] exceeded any that we have heard of.' Mountgarret estimated that the number of Aborigines 'was not less than 5 or 6 hundred'. Knopwood, *The Diary*, p. 51.
[161] Ryan, 'Risdon Cove', p. 115. The evidence for this is the testimony of Edward White – see chapter two.
[162] J. B. Walker, *Early Tasmania: Papers read before the Royal Society of Tasmania During the Years 1888 to 1899*, Hobart: Government Printer, 1989, p. 268.
[163] p. 269.
[164] Knopwood, *The Diary*, p. 145. This was the country of the *Mouheneenner* People. It was likely that, with such large numbers, they had been joined by other south east bands, people who did not speak the *Mairremener* language.
[165] L. Ryan, 'Patterns of Migration in Tasmania: the Aboriginial experience', *Bulletin of the Centre for Tasmanian Studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1989-1990, p. 7. Ryan gives no references.

but moving inland and to the mountains in the summer months.'[166] Kemp's opinion appears to be based solely on food quest. Betty Hiatt, in an extensive paper on the food quest of the Tasmanian Aborigines, analysed the ethnographic evidence of seasonal populations based on geographic locations. She noted that this evidence 'does not support the view that the east coast Aborigines moved inland in spring and summer ... of the forty-nine dated observations ... twelve out of twenty-seven [south-east observations] were summer [recordings]', when, under the migration theory, there should have been none.[167] Hiatt considered that:

> Large gatherings containing several groups probably clustered around food supplies at certain times of the year and at these gatherings no doubt, *joint ceremonies were performed and quarrels settled as they were on the mainland*

and

> the way the Tasmanians moved over the country was similar to the movement pattern of mainland natives, especially in those southern areas. In Australia, each group ranged over territory in a predictable way usually defined by ordinary and seasonal food supplies, climate, geography, *and social and political duties* [168]

Jones agreed with this assumption, and pointed to the likely routes used by bands travelling from the east coast inland, which accord with the major routes discussed above.[169] In particular, he noted Robinson's journal entry of the attack on Espie's hut on the Bashan Plains in August 1830, where Robinson was informed that 'three tribes – Big River, Oyster Bay and Port Sorell – [were] present'.[170] That is, the attack by the combined bands took place in winter on the lower slopes of the Plateau. At the least this is an indication of purposeful movement without regard to season. It would appear that Hiatt's assumption is reasonable: migrations took place for multiple reasons, and that Tasmanians moved for similar reasons as the mainland Aborigines. Food quest was undoubtedly part of the equation, but other motivations included trade, particularly in tools and ochre; social duties, including the facilitation of exogamous relationships and the conduct of ceremonies; and simply for pleasure – the gathering of the sap of the cider gum being an example.

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[166] T. B. Kemp, 'The Prehistory of the Tasmanian Aborigines', *Australian Natural History*, December, 1963, p. 243.
[167] B. Hiatt, 'The food quest and the economy of the Tasmanian Aborigines', p. 202.
[168] Hiatt, pp. 203, 216. My emphasis.
[169] Jones in Tindale, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia,* pp. 339, 340.
[170] Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* pp. 507, 508, 551.

It's time to gather: nomadic journeys for ceremony and pleasure

In short, the migrations were concerned with and were part of the whole of the nomadic culture of the *Mairremener*, including spiritual and ceremonial matters. In addition to the previous discussion on cosmology and spirituality, the roads played a vital role in Aboriginal ceremonial life. The ethnographic evidence is sparse, and relies on the testimony of Robinson and to a lesser degree on Jorgenson as noted in chapter two under. However, Brown pointed out that 'it is clear that the spiritual and ceremonial life of Aborigines living in eastern Tasmania at the time of European settlement was very rich.'[171] It included elaborate burial rituals, as well as dance, storytelling and song, much of it recorded by Robinson.[172] Given the evidence in Robinson's journals of the association of storytelling with geography, it is likely that spectacular geological features such as the 'skittleballs' near Lake Fergus, a well-known meeting place for the Big River and Oyster Bay Peoples, held a spiritual value for the Aborigines. A cultural feature allied to the ritual and spiritual life of the *Mairremmener* is their use of the arts. Dance, storytelling and song, as noted above, are frequently recorded by Robinson in his journals. A dance of the *Lowreenne* (the Port Davey People), which Robinson calls *Truedecum*, is described at length, and he noted that the People 'are certainly the best dancers of any aborigines I have yet seen.'[173] The ability to adapt dance to cultural change is noted above in the form of the "horse dance". Singing storytelling is similarly recorded at length, the songs and stories often recording exploits during internecine wars.[174] Jorgen Jorgenson also recorded dancing and singing during which the Aborigines 'would dilate on the happier days when they could hunt on good ground'.[175] Drawings and rock art also featured powerfully in Tasmanian culture. Apart from the numerous references in Robinson's, Jorgenson's and James Ross's journals to art in huts, James Erskine Calder, on an expedition to the Western Mountains, came across huts,

> adorned ... with several rude charcoal drawings, one representing a kangaroo of unnatural appearance ... another was meant for an emu; a third was also an animal that might have been either a dog, a horse, or a crocodile, according to the fancy of the connoisseur. But the *chef-d'-œuvre* was a battle piece, a native fight – men dying and flying all over it.[176]

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[171] Brown , *Aboriginal Archaeological Sites in Eastern Tasmania*, p. 27.

[172] Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* pp.249, 277, 278, 282, 300, on dances; p. 493 on burials,; p. 887 on storytelling, for examples.

[173] Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* pp. 143, 144. Numerous other references to dancing include pp. 263, 277-278, 281-282, 300 'the most obscene that can be conceived'.

[174] p. 379, for example.

[175] Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines*, p. 54.

[176] Calder, *Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits, &c.* p. 33; Robinson described at length the manner of inscribing the 'circle' drawings commonly found in huts and in rock art, noting that 'Those circles are emblematical devices of men and women'. Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 542, 543. Also

Rock art, while not as commonly described as the hut drawings, was also observed, predominantly consisting of circle drawings. Apart from Robinson's examples in his journals, a fine example can be found near Lake Mary in the Western Ranges.[177] This broad spectrum of the arts indicated a vibrant and adaptive culture, far removed from the regressive culture asserted by Jones and others.

A further cultural feature of migrations that involved both trade and ceremony was the acquisition of ochre. Although ochre deposits occur on the east coast (Maria Island for example), the most desired material came from the well-known ochre mines on the Gog Range, and at Mount Housetop in the north.[178] These locations were visited by Robinson, and the Aborigines in his party not only knew of the source, but were persistent in their wish to visit the sites.[179] The material was certainly used for adornment, but, like mainland practices, it had a deeper social purpose. Lloyd Robson and Brian Plomley carried out an archaeological survey of the Gog Range in 1982, and noted the importance of ochre in the Tasmanians' social life[180], as did Antonio Sagona in pointing out the variation in 'ornamentation according to the nature of the occasion.' [181] Its desirability sometimes led to warfare: Robinson refers to a 'war' between the *Paredarererme* of Oyster Bay People and the *Luggermairrerner* of the Great Lake People 'in consequence of ... breaking the treaty ... the *Luggermairrerner* would not give the red ochre as agreed.'[182]

A principal reason for the gatherings on the Central Plateau was certainly the collection of the sap from the cider gums (*Eucalyptus gunnii*). The practice appeared to have been an important part of the cultural life of the Aborigines. The tree is distributed across the Central Plateau, with heavy concentrations in the area west of the Great

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Jorgenson in Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines*, p.58; Ross, *Recollections of a Short Excursion to Lake Echo,* p. 52.

[177] Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* pp. 233, 581, 790, 915. On Lake Mary - photographs and personal comment to the author by Mr Randall Trethowie of Longford.

[178] Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* pp. 898, 903, 904, 918 n.106, 920 nn.134, 136.. Also Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition,* p. 71.

[179] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, pp. 549, 550, 599, 'when they arrived at the spot the first mineral they met with they patted with their hands and kissed it.', p. 600.

[180] L. Robson & B. Plomley, 'Mining for Ochre by the Tasmanian Aborigines', *The Artefact*, vol. 7 (1-2), 1982, p. 5.

[181] A. Sagona, *Bruising the Red Earth: Ochre Mining and Ritual in Aboriginal Tasmania*, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1994, p.20.

[182] Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* p. 257.

Lake.[183] Scarring of the trunk or branches resulted in a free-flowing sap 'collected ... in holes lined with clay and [the Aborigines] covered it with bark until it fermented', producing a much sought after, mildly-alcoholic drink.[184] Robinson recorded 'numerous cider trees' on the plain at the north end of Lake Echo, most of which had been tapped. He noted that 'my people greedily partook of [the juice] ... I am told it frequently makes them drunk.' James Ross, on his excursion to Lake Echo in 1823, noted 'fine specimens of that species of eucalyptus called the cider tree' near the Shannon River. He described the method used by the Aborigines to extract and ferment the sap, which 'settles into a coarse sort of wine or cider rather intoxicating if drank to any excess.' Jorgenson 'met with large quantities of Cider trees' at Lake Fergus in 1826.[185] David Burn noted that 'By tapping [the cider tree] during the height of summer, a sort of acrid sweet liquor is obtained. To this liquor the name of cider has been given, which in no way it resembles'.[186] William Breton, on his 'Excursion to the Western Range' in 1841, while on the Central Plateau claimed that:

> The Shepherds and stock keepers who tend the flocks and herds on that elevated region are in the habit of making deep incisions [in the trunk of the cider gums] wherever an exudation of the sap is perceived ... The holes are made in such a manner as to retain the sap ... and large enough to hold a pint. Each tree yields from half to a pint daily ...[187]

Numerous stock keepers' huts were located on the shores of Lake Fergus. The ruins of five were observed on a field trip to the Lake in February 2007, the barrel and firing mechanism of a flintlock musket being recovered from one site. It can be reasonably assumed that the stock keepers observed and adopted the Aborigines' practice of tapping the trees and fermenting the sap. No records of the fermentation of other liquids by the Tasmanians exist. The use of *E. gunnii* for this purpose by the *Mairremmener* and perhaps by other Aboriginal socio-linguist groups in Van Diemen's Land would have been a powerful reason to travel to the region.

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[183] K. J. Williams & B. M. Potts, 'The natural distribution of *Eucalyptus* species in Tasmania', *Tasforests*, vol. 8, December 1996, pp.72-74. Note that a sub-species of *E.gunnii – divaricata* – has been defined by Prof. Potts. The sub-species is now commonly known as the 'Miena Cider Gum'.

[184] T. E. Burns & J. R. Skemp (eds), *Van Diemen's Land Correspondents*, Launceston: Queen Victoria Museum, 1961, pp. 100. R. W. Gunn forwared 'two bottles of Cider from the Eucalyptus' to the eminent botanist, Sir William Hooker, in 1844. The cider was analysed by Dr R. D. Thompson of Glasgow. The specific gravity of the fluid was 1338.1, and it consisted of sugar, acetic acid, water and alcohol. Sir W. J. Hooker, *The London Journal of Botany*, Vol. III, 1844, pp. 500, 501.

[185] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, pp. 534, 556, 557; Ross, *op. cit.* p.59; Jorgenson , *Journal when on an expedition of discovery*, p. 64.

[186] David Burn, *A Picture of Van Diemen's Land*, (1840-41), facsimile ed., Hobart: Cat & Fiddle Press, 1973, p. 129.

[187] W. H. Breton , 'Excursion to the Western Range, Tasmania', p. 140.

What's on the menu? The diet of the Tasmanians

Foods that would have accompanied this pleasurable pastime have not been extensively studied. The association of nomadism with food quest was canvassed by Betty Hiatt in 1967, reconstructing the Tasmanians' diet from 287 observations of Aboriginal foods made by explorers and settlers, from the earliest maritime voyagers to historians writing well after Tasmanian Aboriginal societies had been fragmented and the survivors sent into exile. Hiatt noted 191 direct observations of the foods used by the various bands, and 96 observations she described as 'gossip'; that is, information obtained as hearsay.[188] Many of the observations came from Robinson's journals, and from this source Hiatt obtained a more complete picture of a varied diet than was given by the earlier reports based on the littoral economy. Her collation of the observations reflected Aborigines eating, cooking or preparing food; hunting, fishing and gathering; observations of food remains at camp hearths and middens; and hunting devices such as 'bird traps, kangaroo snares, notched trees ... for example'.[189] Hiatt's comprehensive survey enabled her to geographically locate 125 of the direct observations, and to construct tables of diets within regions, reflecting the economy of the bands occupying that country. Table 2 (Table L) reproduced below, divided the observations into seasons and four regions, revealing thirty-eight relating to the south-east and inland areas.[190] Many of the coastal observations were made by the early maritime explorers in isolated locations such as Bruny Island, but it is reasonable to assume that littoral hunting and gathering applied commonly among all the socio-linguist groups. The issues that Hiatt particularly concluded from the observations were, firstly, that 'there is no positive evidence that the Tasmanian Aborigines exploited coastal foods for only part of the year'[191], the corollary to which is that terrestrial foods were also exploited without reference to seasons. This conclusion supports the proposition that the nomadism of the east coast peoples was not solely economically-driven. Secondly, Hiatt noted that, contrary to observations on mainland Australia, the Tasmanians ate a relatively lower proportion of vegetable foods – as low as 8% of the diet on the east coast to a figure of 20% on the west coast. [192] A third observation was the lack of certain foods from the diet, cartilaginous fish being the major omission as previously discussed, but also including

[188] B. Hiatt, 'The Food Quest and the Economy of the Tasmanian Aborigines' *Oceania*, vol. 33, nos. 2 & 3, pp. 99-103 & 190-219.
[189] p. 109.
[190] p. 124.
[191] p. 123.
[192] p. 119.

snakes and amphibians and only passing references to terrestrial animals such as the quoll, Tasmanian devil and thylacine.[193]

TABLE L

Seasonal Diet in South-west, North-west, North-east, South-east and Inland *

Food Categories	South-west				North-west				North-east				South-east				Inland			
	Su.	A.	W.	Sp.	Su.	A.	W.	Sp.	Su.	A.	W.	Sp.	Su.	A.	W.	Sp.	Su.	A.	W.	Sp.
	No. Obs.	No. Obs.	No. Obs.	No. Obs.	No. Obs.	No. Obs.	No. Obs.	No. Obs.	No. Obs.	No. Obs.	No. Obs.	No. Obs.	No. Obs.	No. Obs.	No. Obs.	No. Obs.	No. Obs.	No. Obs.	No. Obs.	No. Obs.
Macropods	—	2	1	2	—	—	4	1	—	—	1	1	—	2	—	—	1	1	—	1
Marsupial carnivores	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1
Small marsupial mammals	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	1	—	—	3	—	—	1	—	—	—
Wombats	—	5	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	2	—	—	—
Seals	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Marine crustacea	1	2	1	—	1	—	2	—	—	—	—	1	3	2	—	—	—	—	—	—
Marine mollusca	2	4	—	—	—	4	2	1	—	—	—	—	6	3	1	1	—	—	—	—
Freshwater crustacea	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Vegetables	2	3	—	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	1	1	3	2	1	—	1	1	—	2
Rocky sea coast birds	—	—	—	—	—	—	2	1	—	2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Lagoon birds	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Land birds	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Miscellaneous birds	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Eggs	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	2x	3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Insects	—	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Total	6	17	3	2	3	5	12	5	4	3	7	6	12	12	2	1	5	2	0	4

* The south-west has already been defined in the footnote on Table J. The north-west area extends along the coast north of (and excluding) Macquarie Harbour around to and including Port Sorell. The north-east region is the area east of Port Sorell around to Oyster Bay and bounded inland by the South Esk River. South-east is south of (and including) Oyster Bay around to (and excluding) Prion Bay in the south. Every observation not occurring in any of these four areas is " inland ".

Su. = Summer W. = Winter No. Obs. = Number of Observations
A. = Autumn Sp. = Spring x = Rocky sea coast birds' eggs

Table 2 : Betty Hiatt, 'The Food Quest and the Economy of the Tasmanian Aborigines', *Oceania*, vol. 38, no. 2, 1967, p. 124.

The foods predominating on the east coast and hinterland were the macropods, marine molluscs and crustaceans (52% of the diet), and marsupial mammals (28%).[194] The low percentage of birds and eggs (10%) is surprising, given the ethnographic evidence noted above of seasonal band movements to such places as Moulting Lagoon. Hiatt also noted the conclusions of Dr Fritz Noetling's 1910 analysis of the Tasmanians' diet, based on the work of Ling Roth.[195] Noetling concluded that the diet contained a considerable excess of protein and a lack of carbohydrates. Hiatt dismissed this conclusion on two grounds: first, the lack of substantive evidence of the actual quantities of vegetables eaten; and secondly, on Noetling's failure to take into account carbohydrates obtained from fatty foods consumed, such as seals and shearwater chicks. The vegetables consumed consisted in the main of fern roots eaten raw, seeds from Acacia, Sophora or Boobialla plants roasted in the pods, the inner leaves of the grass tree, seaweed[196], kangaroo apples (*Solanum laciniatum)* and the native potato (*Gastrodia*

[193] Hiatt, p. 115.
[194] p. 117. (Table E)
[195] p. 123.
[196] pp. 129, 130.

sesamoides).[197] Plomley and Cameron also listed a large range of vegetables and fruits identified from various journals, including four varieties of ferns; seven fruits; seven fungi including the well-known 'native bread' (*Polyporus mylittae*); acacia gum; two leaf bases; root bases of native lilies, rushes and sedges; four storage roots, including the native potato and the native carrot (*Daucus glochidiatus*); and two underground shoots.[198] This evidence, albeit limited, demonstrated that the diet of the *Mairemmenner* was varied and relatively nutritious, even given a lesser emphasis on vegetable foods. The reasons for the lower percentages of vegetables in the diet is a subject for further investigation using modern forensic tools now available to scientists.

***A past recovered: the prehistoric* Mairremmener**

Without the benefit of a written history or any substantial information in a recorded form, the prehistory of the Tasmanians must perforce rely on archaeology, anthropology, language analysis and geography to recover any knowledge of the society and culture of the people of the east coast and the Central Plateau of this isolated island. The sciences will always remain works in progress, with modern forensic techniques revising and adding to the works of investigators of the past. Inevitably, contested opinions on scientific investigations arise, and that is certainly the case in respect of the Tasmanians. The outline of the formation of the *Mairremmener* bands as set out above incorporates new elements, the results of recent field work and reinterpretations of previous works. In particular, the incorporation of archaeological investigations carried out since the mid-1980's on the east coast and the hinterland and through the Midlands, and those on the Central Plateau, have added significantly to previous knowledge of the prehistoric peoples of those areas. With the addition of the latest language analysis carried out by Taylor, a much clearer picture of the development of the particular socio-cultural group that occupied that country is now revealed.

Taken with an analysis of the limited prehistorical anthropological information available, that is, evidence of the motivations of food quest, diet and the nature of the food economy, trade (particularly in stone tools and ochre), social and ceremonial duties, exchange of women and pleasurable get-togethers (all of which provided good reasons

[197] Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land,* . pp. 55, 56.
[198] B. Plomley & M. Cameron, 'Plant Foods of the Tasmanian Aborigines', *Records of the Queen Victoria Museum, Launceston,* No. 101, 1993, pp. 1-27.

for the nomadic journeys from the east coast to the Plateau), the prehistoric picture now painted is of a loose agglomeration of socio-cultural groups – "bands" – sharing a common language and culture, all leading a healthy and full cultural life. In the next chapter, the observations of European explorers and settlers are analysed, in order to complete the picture of the *Mairremmener*-speakers at the point of time when the British colonizers arrived in Van Diemen's Land.

Chapter Two

An enduring and successful way of life: the structure of *Mairremmener* society

... the hunting way of life has been the most successful and persistent adaptation man has ever achieved.

Richard B. Lee and Irven Devore[1]

The procedural fault of the received wisdom was to read from the material circumstances to the economic structure, deducing the absolute difficulty of such a life from its absolute poverty ... poverty is a social status. As such it is the invention of civilization.

Marshall Sahlins[2]

The peoples of terra incognita: the early ethnographic record

On 2 December 1642, Abel Janszoon Tasman, commanding the Dutch ships *Heemskerk* and *Zee-haen* and sailing from the Dutch colony of Batavia, arrived at 'a convenient bay' on the south-east coast of a land he considered to be the southern part of the continent of New Holland. Pilot-major Visscher led a landing party, where he reported

> [they] had found high, yet level land with greenstuff (unplanted Being forthcoming from God and nature) fruit-bearing Timber in abundance, and a running water place many empty valleys; which water indeed good ...[they] had heard some sound of People, also playing almost like a horn or small gong ... but [they] had not managed to See anyone. That [they] have seen 2 trees about 2 to 2½ fathom thick 60 to 65 feet high under Boughs, in which trees gashed with flints and the bark was peeled off in shape of Steps Each being measured fully 5 feet from one another So that they presumed, here to be Very tall people or that these same by some means must know how to climb up said trees.

The spores of animals were observed, together with 'numbers of wild gulls and birds and geese'; and rising thick smoke. On the next day Tasman again approached the shore in a small boat, and had the ship's carpenter swim ashore with a flag and staff to claim the land in the name of the Dutch Crown. He then

> rowed back to the ships leaving posterity and the Inhabitants of this land (who did not show themselves, although we surmise some where not far from there and were with watching eyes on our proceedings)

planting the flag 'as a memorial'.[3] Heading east, Tasman left the shores of *Antonius van Diemenslandt.*[4]

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[1] Lee & Devore (eds), *Man the Hunter*, p.3.
[2] Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, pp. 32, 33, 37.
[3] A. Sharp, *The Voyages of Abel Janszoon Tasman*, London: Clarendon Press, pp. 110-112, quoting from Tasman's journal.

The bay, just north of the Derwent Estuary and now named "Blackman Bay", was the country of the *Mairremmener*, a People he did not see. The points of particular note from Tasman's journal are, first, the stripping of bark from the trees, likely for the construction of shelters rather than 'to climb up and gather the birds nests'; and secondly, the record of smoke from inland fires, a sighting to be repeated many times in later explorations.[5]

One hundred and thirty years passed before the next recorded visit to the south-eastern coast of Tasman's *Antonius van Diemenslandt* – Van Diemen's Land. On 4 March 1772, Marion du Fresne with the ships *Mascarin* and *Marquis de Castries* led a French expedition into a bay just north of Tasman's landing place, which he named 'Marion Bay'.[6] Three boatloads of men went ashore and effected the first recorded encounter with *Mairremmener* People, probably of the *Pydairrerme* band. The meeting was friendly until a fourth boat arrived and the 'natives [became] increasingly restive'. Marion, upon deciding to withdraw, was subject of an attack with stones and spears, one crewman being wounded and Marion himself was struck with a stone. The boats then headed along the shoreline looking for a safer landing place, but were followed by the Aborigines who again resisted a landing. The French opened fire with muskets, wounding several. They then landed and pursued the band into the bush where they came across one dead Aborigine as the result of the clash. Marion and his ships then departed the eastern coast, heading eastwards for New Zealand.

Enlightened explorers: British scientific voyages of discovery

The next visits by explorers to the east coast of Van Diemen's Land stemmed from 'the spirit of the Enlightenment: a voracious scientific appetite for knowing the natural world'.[7] The expeditions of Louis-Antoine de Bougainville and James Cook to the 'South Seas' in the years 1766-1769 and 1772-1775 respectively, generated great interest in the Academies of France and Great Britain, with their emphasis on

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[4] p. 41. Tasman's name for the land, after the governor of Batavia. He also named the bay "Frederik Henrik".
[5] p. 110.
[6] Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition*, p.1.
[7] S. Anderson, 'French anthropology in Australia, a prelude: the encounters between Aboriginal Tasmanians and the expedition of Bruny d'Entrecasteaux, 1793, *Aboriginal History*, vol. 24, 2000, pp. 212, 213.

scientific examination of *terra incognita* as opposed to earlier expeditions of discovery. In February 1773, Cook's two ships, the *Resolution* and the *Adventure*, sailing south of the Australian continent in the Southern Ocean, were separated by fog and bad weather. The *Adventure,* captained by Tobias Furneaux, sighted South Cape on the south coast of Van Diemen's Land and made landfall in on 9 March 1773. A boat was sent ashore, and

> saw several places where the Indians had been, and one they lately had left, where they had a fire, with a great number of pearl escallop shell around it ... There was a path from this place, through the woods, which in all probability leads to their habitations... [8]

The weather became inclement and Furneaux recovered his landing party, then sailed north along the coast seeking Frederick Henry Bay, which he discovered to be 'five leagues' south of the bay named by Tasman. Furneaux spent five days in this harbour recording the flora and fauna (although the only animal found was an 'oppossum'). Smoke and large fires were observed to the north, and, although no Aborigines were seen,

> there were several wigwams or huts, where we found some bags and nets made of grass ... In one of them there was the stone they strike fire with, and tinder made of bark [and] one of their spears ... [the huts were] so poorly done that they will hardly keep out a shower of rain. In the middle is a fireplace, surrounded with heaps of muscle [sic], pearl scallop, and cray-fish shells; which I believe to be their chief food ... I believe, they have no settled place of habitation ... but wander about in small parties from place to place in search of food ... what is remarkable, we never saw the least marks of either canoe or boat ...[9]

Furneaux's judgement of these unseen people was harsh: 'a very ignorant and wretched set of people, though natives of a country capable of producing every necessary of life, and a climate the finest in the world.'[10] Furneaux named his anchorage 'Adventure Bay', and sailed north, keeping to the east of 'Maria Isles' and 'Schoutens Isles' (both named by Tasman), and at latitude 39° 50' headed east towards New Zealand. Furneaux had in fact landed on Bruny Island, the country of the *Nuenonne*, who were not associated with the *Mairremmener.* Furneaux was not a scientist and had no-one of scientific training aboard his ship; his observations however on the nature of the 'huts', firemaking apparatus and food form a first record of those features of east coast Aboriginal culture.

On 26 January 1777, during his third voyage of exploration, James Cook made landfall on the east coast of Van Diemen's Land. Again sailing in the *Resolution* and

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[8] James Cook, *A voyage towards the South Pole, and round the world,* p. 110.
[9] Tobias Furneaux in Cook, pp. 113, 114.
[10] p.114.

accompanied by Charles Clerke in the ship *Discovery*, Cook landed at Adventure Bay, noting 'altho' we had as yet seen none of the Inhabitants we however saw their smoaks but a little way up in the woods'.[11] Parties were sent ashore to collect wood and to cut grass. On the third morning they 'were agreeably surprised ... with a Visit from some of the natives, Eight men and a boy';

> they came out of the Woods to us without shewing the least mark of fear and with the greatest confidence imaginable, for none of them had any weapons , except one who had in his hand a stick about 2 feet long and pointed at one end. They were quite naked & wore no ornaments, except the large punctures or ridges raised on the skin, some in straight and others in curved lines, might be reckoned as such: they were of common stature but rather slender; their skin was black and also their hair, which was woolly as any Native of Guinea, but they were not distinguished by remarkably thick lips nor flat noses, on the contrary their features were far from being disagreeable; they had pretty good eyes and their teeth were tolerably even but very dirty; most of them had their hair and beards anointed with red ointment and some had their faces also painted with the same composition.[12]

This is the first careful observation and description of the Tasmanians: the men were probably of the *Nuenonne*, the Bruny Island People. Cook presented them with knives, hatchets and food in the form of bread, fish and birds, which they discarded except for the birds. Upon a demonstration of firepower by the discharge of muskets at a target and in the air 'they instantly ran into the woods'.[13] The following day twenty Aboriginal men and boys encountered a shore party, their language being 'wholly unintelligible to us ... it is different from that spoken by the inhabitants of the more Northern parts of this Country'.[14] Cook noted that they wore loose around their neck '3 or 4 folds of small Cord which was made of the fur of some animal, and others wore a narrow slip of the Kanguroo skin tied round the ankle'[15]. He also noted their ignorance of fish-hooks, and did not see any 'Canoe or any Vessel in which they could go upon the water'. He commented that, although rejecting fish offered to them by the sailors, 'it was evedent that shel fish made a part of their food by the many heaps of Muscle shels we saw in different parts near the shore and about some deserted habitations near the head of the bay'. These 'habitations' were 'little Shades or hovels built of sticks and covered with bark'. [16] On returning to the *Resolution*,

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[11] J. C. Beaglehole (ed), *The Journals of Captain James Cook on his voyages of discovery: Volume III – The voyage of the* Resolution *and the* Discovery *1776-1780*, Cambridge: The Hakluyt Society, 1967, pp. 50, 51.
[12] p. 52.
[13] p. 53.
[14] p. 54. Cook was referring to mainland Australia, discovered on his first voyage.
[15] p. 54 Clerke added 'The inhabitants seem to have made the least progress towards any kind of Improvement since Dame Nature put them out of hand, of any People I have met with ... there was a harmless Chearfullness about them ...' n.2, p. 54. Clerke was obviously a man of the Enlightenment.
* See pages 61-69.

Cook was told that his second-in-command, Lieutenant James King, had encountered several women and children while ashore, and had observed the use of 'Kanguroo skin' as a form of covering 'for no other purpose than for the conveniency of carrying the child'; the shorn heads of some women; and similar body scarring on the women as that on the men. Cook had sent his surgeon William Anderson ashore to make scientific observations of flora and fauna, the inhabitants, and of the geology of the country. Anderson was apparently skilled to a degree in this form of research, as his report indicates. As well as preparing an albeit brief vocabulary of Aboriginal language, Anderson perceptively noted:

> the inhabitants of this place are, doubtless, from the same stock with those of the northern parts of New Holland ... I am persuaded that distance of place, entire separation, diversity of climate, and length of time ... will account for greater differences, both as to their persons and as to their customs ...[17]

Cook also concluded that Van Diemen's Land was the southernmost part of the continent of New Holland. He then sailed eastwards to New Zealand. While Cook's observations are often considered inferior to those of the later French scientific expeditions*, their accuracy is undeniable, and they represent the first significant knowledge of the peoples of the east coast and of their way of life.[18]

William Bligh, the third British explorer on a scientific voyage, sailing in the ship *Bounty*, arrived at Adventure Bay on 20 August 1788.[19] Bligh had been sailing master on the *Resolution* during the voyage of discovery in 1777, and was therefore acquainted with the landfall and harbour. Bligh had on board two botanists – David Nelson and William Brown – recommended by Sir Joseph Banks for the care of plants discovered on the voyage. Nelson undertook a survey of the flora and fauna of the lands adjacent to the bay over the next few days, and planted exotic trees and vines, including apples, oranges and other fruits. At first no Aborigines were sighted, but on 1 September Bligh 'observed, for the first time, signs of natives ... Fires were seen on

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* See pp. 52-61

[16] Beaglehole, *The Journals of Captain James Cook*, pp. 54, 55.

[17] pp. 55, 181.

[18] Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition*, pp. 6, 7,160, 161, for comments on the lack of "scientific" observation.

[19] William Bligh, *A Voyage to the South Sea, Undertaken by the Command of His Majesty for the Purpose of Conveying the Bread-Fruit Tree to the West Indies, in His Majesty's Ship the* Bounty, *Commanded by Lieutenant William Bligh, etc.*, London: George Nicol, 1792. Facsimile edition, Libraries Board of South Australia, 1969, p.45.

the low land, near Cape Frederick Henry[20], and at daylight, we saw the natives with our glasses.'[21] On sending a boat ashore, Bligh was surprised to find William Brown who had been in search of plants and who reported that 'he had met with some of the natives. Soon after we heard their voices like the cackling of geese, and twenty persons came out of the woods.' Twelve men came forward, the women remaining behind. Bligh recognised one of the men from his visit in 1777, 'for his humour and deformity.'[22] He noted their skin colour and the 'scarifications about their shoulders and breast. They were of middle stature or rather below it. One ... was distinguished by his body being coloured with red oker [sic] ... the others were painted black, with a kind of soot'.[23] On another occasion Brown reported that he had met 'an old man, a young woman, and two or three children ... He saw some miserable wigwams, in which nothing but a few kangaroo skins spread on the ground, and a basket made of rushes.'[24] Bligh, expecting further visits from the Aborigines on the next day, was disappointed when they did not appear; however, he noted 'fires in the night, upon the low land to the northward.' Weighing anchor and sailing north past 'Maria's Isles' and Oyster Bay, Bligh left the shores of Van Diemen's Land and headed east-south-east for New Zealand. Particular observations of interest, apart from the confirmation of previous descriptions of what were the *Nuennone* People, were the use of 'oker' by one individual, the contents of the 'wigwam', and the size of the family group encountered by William Brown.

Bligh revisited Adventure Bay between the 9 and 24 February 1792. He again carried two botanists among the crew – Wiles and Smith, who planted more fruit trees and gathered native plants. They also explored parts of Bruny Island. Twenty-six Aborigines, men and women, were encountered, all wearing kangaroo skins as a covering. The Aborigines were observed gathering mussels, and well-defined 'native paths' were noted. Of particular interest were observations of baskets containing 'hard white stones and bark, presumably used for tinder', which Bligh considered might be

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[20] This was not Cape Frederick Henry. Bligh, not realising Bruny Island was not part of the Tasmanian mainland, had mistaken the location. See G. Mackenness, *Captain William Bligh's Discoveries and Observations in Van Diemen's Land*, Sydney: D.S. Ford, 1943, pp. 5-20.
[21] Bligh, *A Voyage to the South Sea*, pp.49, 50.
[22] p. 51.
[23] p. 51.
[24] p. 52.

used for making fire.[25] Following some difficulty with the weather, including the loss of the foreyard of one of his ships requiring a return to Adventure Bay to refit, Bligh finally left Tasmanian shores. The east coast people with whom he had brief contact were the *Nuenonne*: he had not observed any Aborigines north of the Derwent Estuary, and thus had no contact with the *Mairremmener* People.[26]

***Adventurers, traders and mapmakers: other British explorers of* terra incognita**

Three other British maritime explorations of the east coast of Van Diemen's Land took place over the next ten years – James Cox in the brig *Mercury* in 1789; John Hayes in the ships *Duke of Clarence* and *Duchess of Bengal* in 1792; and Matthew Flinders and George Bass in the small sloop *Norfolk* in 1798. Each of these voyages could be described as 'scientific' in only the broadest sense. Giblin claims that Cox's voyage 'though not lacking in a certain element of adventure, was carried out to explore the possibilities of trade and industrial development in whale and seal fishing and fur hunting in the regions visited.' [27] Cox made landfall in Van Diemen's Land at a point opposite 'Maria's Islands', a place he named 'Oyster Bay'.[28] He observed trees hollowed out by fire 'so as to form a shelter from the weather', and 'a hut similar in point of form to that I had seen before on the main, only this was constructed of bark instead of leaves and the branches of trees.'[29] On 9 July 1789, Cox observed smoke, and sending the third mate towards it encountered several Aborigines with 'pieces of lighted wood in their hands.' The Aborigines retreated 'into the woods', repeating the words 'Warra, Warra, Wai.'[30] The next day fourteen or fifteen men and women were encountered, with others concealed in the trees. They carried spears and firesticks, and Cox describes them as 'middle size; and though lean, were square and muscular.' The men were naked (one with a shell necklace), the women with 'a kind of cloak or bag thrown over their shoulders; in which, I suppose, they carry their children.' As they retreated from Cox's party in the face of the

[25] Mackeness, *Captain William Bligh's Discoveries,*. pp. 33, 34.
[26] Bligh did return once more to Van Diemen's Land – on the ship *Porpoise* in 1809, as the deposed governor of New South Wales.
[27] R. W. Giblin, *The Early History of Tasmania: The Geographical Era 1642-1804*, London: Methuen & Co., 1939, p.86.
[28] p. 87. From the account by Lieutenant George Mortimer.
[29] p.87.
[30] p.88. Milligan, *Vocabulary of the Dialects of Some of the Aboriginal Tribes,* p. 44, lists the words '*Warrawah* (Brune Island and South of Tasmania) and *Wurrawena* (Oyster Bay to Pittwater)', giving the meaning 'Spirit of the dead' to the words. John Taylor (personal comment) has pointed out that the "words" may only have been exclamations of fear or excitement.

discharging of firearms, Cox and his men followed them, and at the site of a large fire found

> several little baskets made of rushes ... with a few flints and stones, and a little dried grass, from which circumstance I conclude they produce fire by collision ... there were besides three small buckets for holding water, made of a tough kind of seaweed, and skewered together at the sides; These seem to be their whole stock of domestic utensils.[31]

Cox noted the 'prodigious number of oyster and other shells scattered about ... certain it is, that the natives procure them in abundance.' He considered the inhabitants to be a 'timorous, harmless race of people [who] afford a fine picture of human nature in its most rude and uncultivated state.'[32] Leaving Oyster Bay, Cox sailed south to Frederick Henry Bay, then east into the Tasman Sea. He had probably encountered the *Pyendaymairremener* band of the *Mairremmener* People. Of particular importance were the observations of the shelters, firemaking tools, the 'buckets', the use of fire sticks and the recording of some words. The combination of 'flint-like stones' and tinder is a confirmation of the fire-making ability of the east coast peoples. The numbers encountered also indicated the presence of one band, perhaps of thirty to forty Aborigines. The date of contact is indicative of the nomadic movements of the east coast people; July, the coldest month, would require a movement from the hinterland to the coast. Cox, like Cook, certainly lacked scientific training, but his observations were the first records of the *Mairremmener* People of the east coast people and of a little of their nomadic culture.

John Hayes, a lieutenant in the Bombay Marine, upon being granted extended leave by the East India Company in February 1793, undertook a private expedition in search of spices in the East Indies.[33] Unable to sail east into monsoonal winds in the Timor Strait, he sailed south instead, intending to head west along the southern coast of New Holland. Hayes took his ships into the D'Entrecasteaux Channel and the Derwent Estuary, and spent six weeks sailing in the bays and river, naming various features. No record exists of his time there other than a chart, a sketch and two letters sent to the East India Company. No observations of the inhabitants or details of the environment are extant. He is credited with applying many English names in the estuary and river, including the names 'of brother officers in the Bombay Marine ...'

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[31] Giblin, *The Early History of Tasmania: The Geographical Era 1642-1804*, London: Methuen, 1939 p. 88

[32] p. 88.

[33] p. 138 *et. seq.* for the following account.

The name 'Risdon', for the small cove on the north bank of the Derwent River, was named after William Risdon, the second officer of the *Duke of Clarence*, and has a particular resonance in the history of the *Mairremmener.*[34]

The voyage of Flinders and Bass was essentially a cartographic and hydrographic survey of Van Diemen's Land aimed at confirming it was an island, separated from New Holland by a strait. The explorers circumnavigated the island, landing at several places including Frederick Henry Bay, which Flinders declared 'wretchedly barren'.[35] Entering the Derwent Estuary and sailing upriver to Risdon Cove, Flinders noted that:

> it seems, that the south-east part of Van Diemen's Land is tolerably well inhabited. Once only, in the upper part of the river, were we able to overcome [the Aborigines'] efforts to avoid us. Two women ran off screaming, but a man staid [sic] to receive Mr. Bass and myself; and accepted a swan that was presented to him, with great joy ... He was a short, slight made man, of the middle age. His countenance was more expressive of benignity and intelligence, than of ferocity or stupidity. His features were less negro-like than is usual in New South Wales; and his hair was either cut or burned very close. He understood none of the dialects spoked in the neighbourhood Port Jackson ...[36]

Flinders observed that the Aborigines must have 'some mode of conveyance by water':

> For they had visited Betsy's Island, the Isle of Caves, Smooth Island, and Gull Island; and, perhaps, the others. It has been a received opinion, that the inhabitants of this part of Van Diemen's Land have no canoes; and, had our observations been confined to the Derwent River, we should have joined in that opinion.[37]

A topographical study of the land either side of the river and estuary was undertaken and a brief study of the flora and fauna made. Flinders considered 'was a settlement to be formed in this neighbourhood, Relph's Bay would deserve particular attention.'[38] The Aborigines Flinders and Bass encountered were most likely the *Moomairremener* of the Pitt Water district, a band of the *Mairremmener.*

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[34] Giblin, *The Early History of Tasmania,* p. 141.
[35] Matthew Flinders, *Observations on the Coasts of Van Diemen's Land,* , p. 5.
[36] p. 8.
[37] p. 8.
[38] p. 9.

In the name of science: the French scientific explorations of Van Diemen's Land

Apart from the Cook and Bligh expeditions, the observations of the east coast Tasmanians were incidental to the purposes of the maritime explorations; however all provided valuable information on aspects of east coast culture (primarily that of the *Nuenonne* of Bruny Island), and on the physiology of the People. Even so, Cook and Bligh had limited scientifically-trained personnel among their personnel. Anthropological observations (at the time a new science in any event) were necessarily of a perfunctory nature, although research into the natural history of the places visited received attention from the botanists carried on the ships. However, the published journals of these explorers aroused considerable interest among the academies in England and particularly in France. The French government had in 1785 commissioned Jean-Francois Galaup de la Pérouse to lead an expedition to the Pacific in order to carry out scientific studies. The objective was 'to surpass Cook ... to carry out what Cook had not been able to do [but] to add to that explorer's successes.'[39] While La Pérouse had both scientific and commercial success during his expedition, and had arrived in Botany Bay in New Holland on 26 January 1788 (having been preceded by Captain Arthur Phillip by one week), his expedition ended with the loss of both his ships and all his men at Vanikoro in the Santa Cruz islands, leaving an element of mystery about their fate.

The proposal to search for the missing La Pérouse stemmed from a petition to the French National Assembly by the Society of Natural History in Paris in 1791.[40] The Assembly, in agreeing to the proposal to search for the missing expedition, also included a program suggested by the Society for research into natural history and the study of native peoples. Plomley and Piard-Bernier suggested other reasons for mounting this expedition including 'an indisputable concern for the national prestige' and a political motive in forestalling to some extent the expansion of British power in the Pacific.[41] To successfully carry out an expedition with such ambitious and extended objectives demanded comprehensive manning, equipping and outfitting, and a sum of 1,160,000 livres was provided, four percent of the total French naval

[39] Plomley & Piard-Bernier, *The General*, p. x.
[40] pp. xi, 1, 2. The fate of La Pérouse and his ships was unknown at the time and only ascertained by Captain Peter Dillon who visited Vanikoro in 1827: p. 36.
[41] pp. xi, 2.

budget.[42] Bruny d'Entrecasteaux was chosen to lead the expedition. He was a senior and experienced naval captain who had previously led a mission to China in 1785-87. Two ships – *Recherche* and *Espérance* – were thoroughly refitted on the basis of the scientific nature of the voyage. The crews were chosen with great care, and the list of scientists selected to accompany the expedition was extensive: three geographers, five naturalists, two astronomers, two botanists, two artists and a mineralogist. In addition, the three surgeons attached to the expedition were encouraged to engage in scientific work. Plomley and Piard Bernier noted that 86,393 livres were spent on books and scientific equipment, a significant proportion of the expedition's budget. Even though disagreements resulted in some of the scientists leaving the expedition, on the basis of manning and equipment alone it was the most comprehensive European scientific expedition ever mounted to that date.[43]

The expedition sailed from Brest on 28 September 1791. D'Entrecasteaux's instructions were as follows:

> Firstly, whenever possible he was to examine the most likely places where traces of the missing explorer might be found ... Secondly, he was ordered to be sure to report upon the state of the European colonies he called at. Thirdly, he was to direct the work of the team of scientists ... seeing to it that the astronomers scrupulously fulfilled their missions, assisting the geographers to draw up the hydrographic charts, and directing the researches of the naturalists, assigning their individual tasks in accordance with the special qualifications of each one so as to prevent duplication. Fourthly, The King was adamant that all means should be taken to protect those on board ... and when making contact with native peoples to treat them with the utmost respect. All effusion of blood was to be avoided and good relations preserved in every way ... Lastly ... to adopt such measures as would keep the crews in good health.

The order is particularly instructive: after the search for the lost explorer, the political motive is given precedence. The directive to avoid conflict with indigenous peoples was an important instruction. As Plomley and Piard-Bernier pointed out, 'this was a tenet of French culture which was not usually adopted by others ... whose attitude was that power came only from the barrel of a gun.'[44] It was an instruction repeated and scrupulously observed by the later French expeditions. The record of d'Entrecasteaux's expedition was drawn by Plomley and Piard-Bernier from the journals of d'Hesmivy d'Auribeau, captain of the *Recherche*, and Huon de Kermadec, captain of the *Espérance*, supplemented by other ships' officers' journals; and the scientific journals kept by Jacques-Julien Houtou de La Billardiere and Louis

[42] Plomley & Piard-Bernier, *The General,* pp. 3, 4.
[43] pp. 17-28. Biographical details of all the scientists are given.
[44] pp. 3, 4. The 'noble savage' of the Rousseauan ideal perhaps being the influence.

Ventenat. La Billardiere's journal was published in 1802 under the title *Voyage à la recherché de La Pérouse.*

The ships made landfall in Tasmania on 21 April 1792, in a bay now known as Recherche Bay, but thought by the explorers to be Storm Bay. The ships remained there until 15 May, the crews carrying out maintenance and the scientists conducting observations onshore. They then sailed north, through the channel now known as 'D'Entrecasteaux', into the Derwent Estuary and Frederick Henry Bay, then around Capes Raoul and Pillar, leaving Tasmania at Tasman Island on 28 May 1792. The encounters with Aborigines on this part of the expedition were limited: Plomley and Piard-Bernier pointed out that on about seven occasions when contact was made the Aborigines fled. One contact was reported by Alexandre-Francois de Saint-Aignan, a marine officer on the *Recherche.* He described a meeting with six Aborigines at length, but the report is dismissed as a fabrication by Ventenat on the basis that the crew members and others accompanying Saint-Aignan saw nothing.[45] However, on the same day (27 May) d'Aribeau reported in his journal that:

> The crew of the large dinghy also saw some natives on the shore to port, who made their escape when they approached ... they met one woman and gave her several trifles, which she would not accept. She took the first advantage of the first opportunity to escape ... She was very small and had two kangaroo skins, one in front which covered her throat and the other on her loins passing between her thighs so as to cover her natural parts. She carried two baskets on her shoulders filled with various objects such as shells and fern roots.[46]

The location of the sighting was at the northern end of Bruny Island, the woman being of the *Nuennone.* It would seem that, given no landings took place on the east side of the Derwent Estuary or on Tasman Peninsula, all sightings of Aborigines on this section of d'Entrecasteaux's voyage were *Nuennone* of Bruny Island or *Lyluequonny* of D'Entrecasteaux Channel district.

The expedition returned to Tasmania in December 1792, making landfall and anchoring in Rocky Bay on 22 January 1793. While the crews cleaned and repaired the ships and went ashore to find water and cut wood, the scientists resumed their observations. It was during this time that La Billardiere undertook the excursion from Rocky Bay to South Cape, returning by the Aboriginal road along the coast.* The

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* This excursion is noted on page 36.

[45] Plomley & Piard-Bernier, *The General,* pp. 92,126, 127, 274, 356.

[46] p. 92.

expedition remained at Rocky Bay for twenty-three days, with small boats sent to various locations for scientific observations. The only exploration of the country on the east side of the Derwent estuary (that is, the country of the *Mairremmener*) was by Willaumez and Beautemps-Beaupré from 14-19 February, in a boat with twelve men. They ventured into the Derwent River and Ralph's Bay, and into Frederick Henry Bay, spending the night of the 18 February on Green Head, Tasman Peninsula, the country of the *Pydairrerme* band of the *Mairremmener*. Although they noted fires burning during the excursion, they did not encounter any Aborigines.[47]

There is no doubt that d'Entrecasteaux's expedition was, to that point, the most comprehensive and thorough in observations made of the nature of the country and of its inhabitants, but limited in its scope by the restriction to a small part of the Island and to only a few Aborigines, all of whom were peoples of the south-east. Stephanie Anderson has pointed out that it was the peaceful nature of the contact with those people which enabled the careful observations recorded, as contrasted to the violent contact made by Marion du Fresne.[48] In addition, Piron's sketches of Aborigines and their culture were most detailed, showing family groupings and their domestic implements such as baskets and water containers, and particularly in depicting the 'Canoe-raft' used by the *Nuenonne*. His sketches of the Aborigines have been criticised as 'fixed in Greek classical model [so] that little can be learnt ... about the bodily characteristics of the natives peoples', but the depiction of a family group showing women gathering seafood is of particular ethnographic interest, classical figures aside.[49] Plomley and Bernier pointed out that the prime value of this expedition was the observations of the lives of the south-east peoples at a time when they were unaffected by substantial outside contact, providing 'very much information about the place at that period'.[50]

The second French scientific expedition to New Holland was undertaken on a commission from the Société des Observateurs de l'Homme, a body formed in Paris in 1799 for the purpose of the study of man 'as an object ... along with the rest of

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[47] Plomley & Piard-Bernier, *The General,* pp. 208-215.
[48] Anderson, 'French anthropology in Australia: a prelude', p. 215.
[49] Plomley and Bernier, pp. 25, 267, 277.
[50] p. 320.

nature'.[51] The formation of the society can be seen as the foundation of the science of anthropology, and one its foremost members, Joseph-Marie Degérando, prepared a memoir on the manner man should be studied, for use on the expedition.[52] Degérando's memoir is particularly instructive in view of the resultant reports of the expedition. In criticising previous studies of indigenous peoples, he commented on the brevity of the visits:

> Their lack of systematisation; their concentration on individuals over social groups; the minute focus on physical details to the detriment of observations about social life; attention to the superficial appearance of the cultural phenomena ... rather than the deeper ideational and ethical aspect.[53]

Anderson noted two further important criticisms made by Degérando: first, of 'the tendency of explorers to judge indigenous customs by inappropriate European analogies'; and secondly, of 'previous travellers' failure to learn indigenous languages.[54] As noted under, François Péron failed to adhere to these instructions; a failure which lessened the value of his observations. Two other memoirs influenced the observations and actions of the expeditioners – that of the naturalist the Baron Cuvier, who requested the collection of indigenous skeletal material for the purpose of determining racial differences; and that of Louis-François Jauffret, who requested the collection of objects suitable for a proposed museum of mankind.[55]

The explorer selected to lead the expedition, Nicholas Baudin, was a member of the society; a naval officer who had previously undertaken expeditions to the Indian Ocean and the West Indies, collecting plants and specimens for museums. This expedition, like its predecessor, was generously funded, equipped and manned. Two well-found frigates – the *Géographe* and the *Naturaliste* – were provided, and the scientists included five zoologists, three botanists, two mineralogists, together with a number of artists and gardeners. As the mapping of the coastline was to form part of

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[51] Anderson, 'French anthropology in Australia, the first fieldwork report: François Péron's 'Maria Island – anthropological observations', *Aboriginal History*, vol. 25, 2001, p.228.

[52] pp. 230, 231; Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition*, pp. 10,11. The official plans for the voyage are contained in memoir from the Comte de Fleurieu of the *Institut National*, and from the Minister of Marine and Colonies, who charged Baudin to 'observe the most complete neutrality and not give rise to a single doubt as to your exactitude in confining yourself to the objects of your mission ...' C. Cornell, *The Journal of Post Captain Nicolas Baudin*, Adelaide: Libraries Board of South Australia, 1974, pp. 1-9.

[53] Anderson, 'French anthropology in Australia, the first fieldwork report', p.230.

[54] p. 230.

[55] p. 231. Both were leading members of the Society.

the mission, two cartographers were also included.[56] A leading proponent of the expedition included in the venture was the naturalist Péron, who had also submitted a memoir of tasks the scientists should undertake, based less on Degérando than the instructions prepared by the naturalist Baron Cuvier, as noted above.[57] Peron's report of the expedition and the supplementary reports of its leader, Baudin, and of other *savants* and the ships' officers added substantially to the knowledge of the Tasmanians and their way of life.

The ships made landfall on the coast of Van Diemen's Land on 13 January 1802, having explored the west coast of New Holland. The landing-place was again the D'Entrecasteaux Channel between Bruny Island and the mainland, and, prior to anchoring Baudin noted that 'we saw a group of fifteen to twenty natives [on Bruny Island], who came to the water's edge to watch us go by.'[58] The expedition remained in the Channel until 17 February 1802, carrying out observations mainly on Bruny Island and occasionally on the mainland. Most of the contacts with Aborigines were made on the Island, the home of the *Nuennone* People, and the contacts were generally reported as being friendly, although some minor violence, initiated by the Aborigines, did occur. No doubt the Aborigines had recalled the visit of the d'Entrecasteaux expedition, and were to a degree familiar with the activities of the explorers and the effect of the weapons they carried. It is probable that some unfriendly contact had also taken place from earlier visits of sealing and whaling vessels.

The journals of the Baudin expedition added to the knowledge of the *Nuennone* People and their culture, especially in the record made of their language (albeit brief), a requirement of the expedition's sponsors. In particular, Péron carried out experiments aimed at testing the strength of the Aborigines using the 'Regnier' dynamometer, and concluded that the People were feebler than Europeans, and of most other indigenous races.[59] In addition, extensive sketches of the Aborigines and

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[56] N. J. B. Plomley, 'French Manuscripts Referring to the Tasmanian Aborigines', *Records of the Queen Victoria Museum,* No. 23, Launceston, June, 1966, pp. 3,4.
[57] Anderson, 'French Anthropology in Australia: the first fieldwork report', pp. 231, 232.
[58] Cornell, *The Journal of Post Captain Nicolas Baudin,* p. 301.
[59] Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition,* pp. 145-159. As to the conclusion Péron drew from these experiments, see Anderson, 'French anthropology in Australia: the first field work report', p. 237; that is, the refutation of 'the "dangerous opinion" that the physical degeneration of man is in proportion to

the culture were made by the artists Petit and Lesueur, sketches regarded as better representations of both physiognomy and physiology (particularly on the nature of bodily adornment and cicatrices), and of the accoutrements of the People; that is, their shelters, utensils and weapons. The observations of the size of hearth groups and of larger bands provided an indication of population numbers, at least at that place and at that time. The observations of foods eaten and the nature of food quest also extended the ethnographic record of the *Nuenonne* and their fellow socio-linguistic group, the *Lyluequonny* of the Huon River estuary.

Leaving Bruny Island, Baudin sailed north to an anchorage on the west coast of Maria Island where he remained from 18 to 27 February 1802. During this time the expedition had direct contact with the *Mairremmener* People, the first such recorded contact since the visit by James Cox to these shores as noted above. Baudin sent his small boats along the coast of Maria Island, and along the mainland shoreline as far south as Cape Frederick Henry, and north to latitude 42° south; that is, past Schouten Island and the Freycinet Peninsula.[60] The journals of Péron, Baudin and others are the most significant record of the east coast people prior to British colonization. They are particularly important by reason of very limited recorded contact between the east coast Peoples and white men to that time. Baudin noted that the Aborigines encountered on Maria Island 'appeared much stronger and more robust than those of D'Entrecasteaux Channel or Bruny Island. They are taller and better-looking', and yet 'There is no doubt that they are the same peoples, as much by reason of their language as their customs.'[61] Baudin recorded a significant difference in the form of the 'canoes' found on Maria Island. They were constructed of bundles of 'rushes', not of bark as found on Bruny Island, although the form was similar.[62] The most important observations were those made by both Péron and Baudin of the two funerary structures on Maria Island, which indicated an elaborate burial ritual of the People and

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his state of civilization.' The circumscribed nature of the experiments gave little value to the conclusions of what, in any event, was a pseudo-science.

[60] Cornell, *The Journal of Post Captain Nicolas Baudin*, p.349. During this voyage the explorers found the channel between the mainland and Schouten Island.

[61] p. 348.

[62] p. 349. Sketches of these canoes by Lesueur in Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition,* facing p. 130; and a comprehensive description of the Bruny Island canoes by Louis-Claude Freycinet,. p. 119. Of great interest is the carrying of fire in the canoes while travelling from the mainland to the Island.

of the custom of disposal of the dead by cremation.[63] As Plomley has pointed out, these ornamented structures provided evidence of a high degree of religiosity, a fact overlooked or ignored by later observers.[64]

Again, the numbers of Aborigines in parties contacted is of importance, not only in any attempt at assessment of the population of the *Mairremmener*, but also as an indication of their mobility, a determinant of the degree of nomadism. Péron encountered fourteen men, mostly young, on Maria Island on 22 February.[65] He undertook a dynamometer test on an older man, collected some words of their language, and attempted forms of intimacy such as embracing and caressing. When anger was displayed by the Aborigines during attempts to exchange goods for weapons, Péron and his party retreated.[66] On 19 February, Baudin encountered 'about twenty natives on the beach' at Oyster Bay; men, women and children. The contact was friendly. Baudin noted that '[although the men] were tattooed like [the Bruny Island men] these had more stripes on their arms.'[67] On 22 February, Baudin crossed the channel from Maria Island to the mainland and observed 'three native canoes' which had spears in them, but 'saw no natives, for they were on the other side of the bay with several of our men.'[68] The only other contact reported was that of François Heyrisson, sub-lieutenant on the *Naturaliste*, who recounted a meeting with Aboriginal men on Maria Island who had harassed two carpenters working onshore. One carpenter had reportedly been led away into the bush, stripped naked and examined by the Aborigines, before being returned unharmed. No numbers were given.[69] The relatively few contacts make assessment of population difficult, but Péron claimed that, on Maria Island, 'those who have been successively under our notice do not seem to make up an assemblage of more than twenty-seven to thirty persons' of whom not more than ten or twelve were men. He repeated Baudin's claim that these people were of the same race as the Bruny Islanders.[70] What is of particular

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[63] Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition,* pp. 57-80; Cornell, *The Jornal of Post Captain Nicolas Baudin,* p. 349. Drawings of these structures by Lesueur in Plomley facing pp. 69, 85.
[64] Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition,* p. 207.
[65] pp. 62-66. Petit sketched 'Bara-Ourou, a native of Maria Island' at this meeting, facing p. 5.
[66] Perhaps the mistrust and anger was not unreasonable, given the nature of Péron's actions.
[67] Cornell, *The Journal of Post Captain Nicolas Baudin,* p. 339. On p. 348, Baudin noted that twenty-three 'natives' were encountered.
[68] p. 342.
[69] p. 340; Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition*, pp. 111, 128.
[70] pp. 92, 93.

interest is the presence of the band at this location in February, a time that accords with Hiatt's view of migratory movements.*

Péron's observations of the *Mairremmener* (probably the *Poticweladedy* band) are contained in his report of 1 March 1802 to Baudin, written after the *Géographe* had sailed from Maria Island.[71] He began the report with an apology for its inadequacies, pleading that he 'did not ... think it my duty to try to establish with the natives that multiplicity of associations and that continuity of communication which are indispensable if one is to obtain coherent and interesting results.'[72] Péron thus appeared to acknowledge that, while he understood Degérando's criticism of previous expeditions, he was more interested in pursuing a 'duty' which he considered he was better suited – that of naturalist. As Anderson noted, 'the things that fascinated him most were natural not cultural phenomenon.'[73] In any event the proposed methods suggested by Degérando 'may [have been] impossible ever to achieve and ... definitely not manageable in the time allocated in this expedition'.[74] Péron's relatively brief description of the Aborigines' appearance is noted above. His notes of the use of charcoal as a decorative material, the observation of the different cicatrices, his recording of some of the language, his significant report on the funerary practices and on the construction and use of canoes are, however, only limited contributions to the knowledge of *Mairremmener* culture. The assumption that the people found on Maria Island were the same as the people found on Bruny Island and the adjacent mainland may well have inhibited more rigorous investigations, given that the observations and records of the *Nuennone* are much more extensive.[75] From the numbers of Aborigines contacted, and the numbers of canoes observed, it is apparent

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* see chapter one, pages 49 & 50.

[71] Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition,* . pp .82-95.

[72] p. 83.

[73] Anderson, 'French anthropology in Australia: the first field work report', p. 239.

[74] M. J. Hughes, 'Philosophical travellers at the ends of the earth: Baudin, Péron and the Tasmanians', *Australian Science in the Making*, R. W. Home (ed), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988, pp. 28, 29. Hughes noted that 'Péron and his fellow voyagers must receive praise for achieving as much as they did in a few weeks.'

[75] Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition,* p. 93. The evidence for the connection between these peoples is based on a purported 'recognition' of individuals, who 'smiled in a friendly way'. The comment that 'It is certain that they belong to the race of Van Diemen's Land as it is probable that they are not always confined to Maria Island' (p. 93) is notable, given archaeological evidence of present times that indicated Aboriginal occupation of the Island was probably transitory – see S. Brown, *Aboriginal Archaeological Sites in Eastern Tasmania,*. p. 48.

that one band only of the *Mairremmener* was involved, probably all or part of the *Poticweladedy* band.

In summary, the records and observations of the maritime explorers insofar as the *Mairremmener* speakers on the east coast of Tasmania were concerned were limited compared to the observations of the People of Bruny Island and the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. The explorers did not venture very far inland, relying in the main on coastal observations: La Billardiere's exploration of the south coast hinterland, as mentioned above, being an exception. In essence, only two expeditions encountered the *Mairremmener* over a period of time sufficient to record something of their appearance and culture prior to British occupation and dispossession – that of James Cox in 1789 and the Baudin expedition in 1802. All other contact was fleeting and no distinction was made between peoples.

A gap in the record: visits by sealers and whalers

One unknown factor is that of contacts made by itinerant whalers and sealers before 1802. For example, Governor King reported that six whaling ships were active off the coast of New South Wales in March 1802. In September of the same year, King reported that 'The small vessels that catch seals about the islands in Basses Straits and Van Diemen's Land belong to the individuals of [Sydney].' A French sealing schooner arrived in November 1802, and asked leave to catch seals 'in and about Basses Straits.' Permission was granted excluding 'Cape Barren and the islands adjacent thereunto; and King's Island ...'[76] These notes are indicators of a busy industry. In the light of the activities of later whalers and sealers, particularly in the cases of abduction of Aboriginal women from Van Diemen's Land and in the more benign engagement in trade, contacts before 1802 most likely took place, almost certainly to the disadvantage of the Indigenous peoples. It has been clearly established that abduction of *Marremmener* women occurred at a later times, as many of the women concerned were recovered from their abductors in the Bass Strait Islands by George Augustus Robinson. The presence of whaling and sealing crews may also account for the knowledge and wariness of the firearms carried by the explorers.

[76] *HRA*, series I, vol. III, pp. 437, 438, 635, 636. The presence of the French sealers is not surprising, as Baudin's reports had by that time reached the Ile de France.

Recording the invisible: the ethnographic records of the British colonizers.

The British occupation of Van Diemen's Land was an incidental postscript in the history of international politics. During the nineteenth century Great Britain and France vied for colonial possessions in furtherance of imperial ambitions. The occupation of New Holland by Governor Arthur Phillip in 1788 had as its legal basis a commission from King George III, which claimed sovereignty and territorial jurisdiction over the continent from Cape York in the north to South Cape in the south, and all the country inland west to the 'one hundred and thirty-fifth degree of longitude, reckoning from the meridian of Greenwich'.[77] The claim therefore encompassed all of Van Diemen's Land, even though it was not understood at the time to be an island, separated from the continent by Bass Strait. The presence of the ships of the Baudin expedition in Port Jackson from April to November 1802 had aroused suspicions of the intentions of the French, and on 21 May and again on 9 November 1802, Governor King advised Lord Hobart, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, of his intention to make a settlement at Port Phillip 'from the probability of the French having it in contemplation to make a settlement on the N. W. coast (of straits), which I cannot help thinking is the principal object of their researches.'[78] Ultimately, it was decided to establish settlements initially at Port Phillip, and subsequently at Port Dalrymple and on the Derwent Estuary. However, these decisions were made on the basis of protecting the sovereignty of the Crown over Van Diemen's Land; in the words of Lord Hobart:

> the establishment of any foreign power on that part of the coast might, in the event of hostilities, greatly interrupt the communication with Port Jackson, and materially endanger the tranquillity and security of our possessions there.[79]

In all the correspondence relating to the formation of new settlements at Port Phillip or in Van Diemen's Land no consideration was given to the rights of the Indigenous peoples; the British sovereign claim was the superior (and only) right.

The instructions given by Governor King on 9 May 1803 to the commandant and superintendent of the first settlement on the Derwent, Lieutenant John Bowen,

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[77] *HRA*, series I, vol. I, pp. 1, 2.
[78] *HRA*, series I, vol. III, pp. 490, 698. The suspicion was based on a report of a casual conversation between Lieutenant- Colonel Patterson and the French officers, pp. 737, 738. For the formal reasons for establishing a settlement at Risdon Cove in Van Diemen's Land, see King to Sir Evan Nepean, 9 May 1803, *HRA* series I, vol. IV, p. 249.
[79] *HRA*, series I, vol. IV, p. 9.

'Jorgen Jorgenson'
Artist unknown; n.d.
Archives Office of Tasmania, PH30/1/483

Dr James Ross, publisher and Shannon River district settler
Artist unknown; n.d.
Archives Office of Tasmania, PH30/1/2037

'Woureddy, a wild native of Brune Island one of Mr Robinson's most faithful attendants attach'd to the mission in 1829'
Benjamin Duterrau, 1835
State Library of Tasmania

'G. A. Robinson Esqe., Chief Protector of the Australasian Aborigines and the pacificator of the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land'
M. Gauci
Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts

contained no mention of the Indigenous inhabitants: they were already invisible.[80] Bowen's first report to King upon establishing the settlement at Risdon Cove advised that

> I have not seen a single Native yet, but some of the People found them on our first arrival, but they appeared very shy and have since retired entirely from us; not apprehending they would be of any use to us I have not made any search after them, thinking myself well off if I never see them again.[81]

That contact, on the east side of the Derwent River, discussed in chapter three, would most probably been with the *Moomairremener* band of the *Mairremmener* whose country included the Pitt Water district; people whose contact with strangers to this point of time had been minimal.

From the moment of occupation of this settlement, and that of the subsequent one established by Lieutenant-Governor David Collins at Sullivan's Cove on the west side of the Derwent in September 1804, the reports of Aborigines were few and sparse in content, particularly in the early years. This is partly the result of the few records that have survived from this period, and also due to the attitude expressed by Bowen, and reflected in the opinions of the majority of the British settlers: that the Aborigines were better unseen. As Marie Fels pointed out, Collins did not mention the Aborigines in any report to Governor King from May 1804 until his general order of 10 February 1808. In this order, which was directed to the settlers relocated from Norfolk Island, Collins warned:

> To be on their guard against surprises from the Natives, who, from Circumstances that have formerly taken place, have become very much irritated against us ... any one, who shall be known to offer wantonly any violence to a Native, or in any way injure or molest them or their Women and Children, will be criminally prosecuted for such an offence.[82]

Collins was referring not only to the initial clash at Risdon Cove, but to the numerous clashes that had taken place, predominantly over the killing of kangaroos for meat at the times when the settlement was desperately short of food.* These clashes are discussed in Chapter four. The point to note is that neither Collins nor any other official during this early period of settlement made any effort to study the Aborigines, their languages or their culture, a failure which increased the likelihood of strife between the two races.

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* See pp. 141-143 & Appendix 2.

[80] *HRA,* series III, vol IV, pp. 153, 154. King, however, expressed his concern at the possibility of a claim over the land by the French.

[81] *HRA*, series III, vol. 1, p. 198.

[82] p. 562.

One diarist who did assiduously record the events of the time was the Reverend Robert Knopwood, the first chaplain of the new settlement, soon to be named "Hobart Town". His journals span the years 1803 to 1838.[83] Until 1819 there are numerous references to Aborigines in the journals, mostly of their activities in and about Hobart or to the south of the new settlement, and only occasionally within the country of the *Mairremmener* speakers. The journal entries were not written in a scientific manner; they reflected the everyday events in Knopwood's life. However, some notion of Aboriginal society and culture can be gleaned from them in such facets as population and band numbers; in food and food quest; weapons and their use; and particularly in the use of fire. From the very beginning of the settlement at Sullivan's Cove, Knopwood noted the extensive firing of the country by the Aborigines. Over the summer months in each year in particular, Knopwood wrote of fires started or observed near the settlement. For example, on 16 February 1805 he noted 'At 8 the drum beat to arms; it was supposd that the corn stacks were set fire by reason of the great fires. It was only the natives.' In March 1805, the robbery and firing of a "house" used by sealers at Oyster Bay is recorded. He noted that 'The natives destroyed about 2000 [seal] skins which they had taken since they were on the island.' [84] These are the first references to the use of fire as a means of repelling the invaders, as opposed to the anthropogenic firing practices of the Aborigines. However, most of the fires Knopwood observed may well have been of the latter nature. On 2 May 1805 he 'went to Herdsman's Cove. Many of the natives were all around and the country in fire. In the eve we had a great deal of rain.' On I January he noted 'rain is very much wanting. The grass [is] all dried up and the country on fire by the natives.' Later that day it rained. On 20 January 1807, Knopwood recorded that, while out shooting 'did not see a kangaroo; the country so lately set fire by the natives. At 6 p.m. we had a moderate shower of rain.' [85] The knowledge of weather patterns in the use of fire, as discussed in chapter one above, is demonstrated in these events. The use of fire as a weapon is canvassed further in later chapters. An event related to the difficulty of firemaking occurred in March 1806, when Knopwood saw

> a native girl about 17 in my garden, the first that I ever see near me ... she wanted some fire which I got for her, and some fish and bread, but returning to get some more fire she ran off.[86]

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[83] Knopwood, *Diary.* The journals from August 1808 to December 1813 are missing.
[84] p. 77, 78. The 'island' referred to would have been Maria Island.
[85] pp. 82, 124, 125.
[86] Knopwood, *The Diary,* p. 104.

The girl was clearly practising a custom observed and noted by Robinson above; that is, fire was obtained from existing sources where possible, rather than going to the trouble of making it.

The majority of Knopwood's contacts with Aborigines were with the *Mouheneenner* band of the country to the west and south of the new settlement: his contact with the Aborigines to the east and north of the Derwent Estuary and River was minimal. The brief descriptions of the cultural life he observed are primarily of the *Mouheneenner* – bark "catermarans" at Brown (or "Brown's") River, the funerary practice of cremation, and the large gatherings of 'between 250 and 200'.[87] The People north and east of the new settlement were *Mairremmener* speakers, and their relationship with the *Mouheneenner* would have been, to a large degree, inhibited by difficulties in communication and observance of territorial boundaries. In reporting the 'affray' at Risdon Cove on 3 May 1804, both Lieutenant William Moore and Collins noted only a large body of Aborigines; men, women and children. A report from the surgeon, J. Mountgarrett, recorded by Knopwood, claimed 'not less than 5 or 6 hundred' Aborigines were involved.[88] An eye witness, convict Edward White, testifying to the Aborigines' Committee some twenty-seven years later, claimed three hundred 'Natives' took part.[89] A full discussion of the 'affray' follows in chapter four, together with the historiography of the event in Appendix 2; however, the question of the number of Aborigines is important. Even the lesser number of three hundred men women and children would indicate a gathering of perhaps seven or more *Mairremmener* bands during a migration as discussed in chapter one. Given the time of year, a migratory return along the Coal River 'road' from the Central Plateau would be indicated, and the diversion to Risdon Cove a matter of inquisitiveness – an opportunity to view and assess the strangers, the new "beings" in the landscape. In the only other direct contact with *Mairremmener* by Knopwood, an Aborigine was brought into the settlement on 3 November 1804. 'The man was much covered with

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[87] pp. 102, 128, 145.
[88] p. 51.
[89] 'Minutes of Evidence taken before the Committee for the Affairs of the Aborigines, 16 March 1830'; (Enclosure No. 3), *Copies of all correspondence between Lieutenant-Governor Arthur and His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies, on the subject of the military operations lately carried on against the Aboriginal inhabitants of Van Diemen's Land*, Hobart: Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1971, p. 53. No evidence of an accurate count is extant. At the very least, White was an eye witness, albeit recounting the event many years later as a much older man.

charcoal and he had a bag made of kangaroo skins about his neck which contained teeth of one of the tribe.' The man was taken from Betsy's Island in the Derwent Estuary, probably the country of the *Pydairrerme* band.[90] Knopwood did, however, demonstrate a keen interest in the Aborigines without attempting to distinguish between cultures. As noted in the following paragraph, he accompanied the scientists Humphreys and Brown on their excursions and in his journals he made an effort to record aspects of the culture of the peoples that he contacted, primarily the People of the south and west of the Estuary – the *Nuennone* of Bruny Island, the *Mouheneenner* of the Derwent, and the *Lyluequonny* of the Channel country and the Huon River.

The lack of interest in the Aborigines is underscored by the absence of any anthropological studies during the early period of British occupation. Scientific interest was mainly confined to botanical, mineralogical and geological studies. For example, in 1804 the government mineralogist Adolarius William Henry Humphrey and the botanist Robert Brown investigated country around the two settlements at Hobart and Port Dalrymple from the ship *Ocean*. The two scientists had first jointly investigated the northern settlement, where they had encountered numbers of Aborigines, two of whom

> were very friendly at first, but returned with a great number of their friends, who, after they had got all they could, behaved so ill, that, at the moment one of them was going to spear Mr Brown, we fired on them: they fled to some distance ...[91]

A further attack upon the scientists took place in the Tamar River a few days later, and the party again fired on them to drive them off. The *Ocean* then sailed for the Derwent Estuary settlement at Risdon Cove, arriving on 10 February 1804. Humphrey and Brown recorded little of the Aborigines they encountered in their expeditions in and around the new settlement, even though they both travelled extensively along the Derwent River and the hinterland, extending at least to the confluence of the Derwent and Ouse Rivers to the east, and along the Coal River. Both scientists concentrated on the specific purposes of their investigations; however, their records of contact with Aborigines, supplemented by the notes in Knopwood's journals on the occasions he accompanied them, add a little to the knowledge of Tasmanian Aboriginal society. On

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[90] Knopwood, *The Diaries*, p. 65.
[91] T. G. Vallance, 'The start of government science in Australia: A. W. Humphrey, His Majesty's Mineralogist in New South Wales, 1803-12', *Proceedings of the Linnean Society of New South Wales*, vol. 105 (2), 1981, p.133.

11 February 1804, Brown recorded a 'Language of Van Diemens Land' consisting of thirty words, with superscript numerals to denote vowel sounds.[92] The words recorded resemble those recorded by Milligan: for example 'nubera' for eyes (Milligan – 'nubrenah'); and 'lungah' for leg (luggunagoota), the equivalence being Milligan's 'South of Tasmania' language, rather than that of the *Mairremmener*.[93] Knopwood reported that a party including Brown and himself encountered 'many natives' and 'a great many native huts and the fires they made', on an excursion to Herdsman's Cove on 7, 8 and 9 March 1804. He noted that 'Cap. Merthow [of the *Ocean*] and Mr. Brown had an interview with them'.[94] On an extensive field trip to the Ouse River confluence Brown did not report any contact with Aborigines or anything of their presence, yet this was the country of several *Mairremmener* bands, particularly during summer months and the early autumn. The only direct report by Brown of 'an interview with the same party of Natives that are generally in the neighbourhood of Sullivan's Cove' appeared in his journal of 15 June 1804. There were no close observations made of them.[95] These People were probably *Mouheneenner* of the west Derwent, the people from whom Brown constructed his vocabulary. Humphrey, in contrast to his several descriptions of contact with Aborigines at Port Dalrymple, made no mention of any contact up to 19 August 1804, when he submitted a final letter of his activities to Governor King, together with specimens collected. While he remained in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, his scientific activities virtually ceased, and his career took a different path, resigning from his position on 30 June 1812.[96] Brown, who continued his field trips in Van Diemen's Land until 9 August 1804 (when he returned to Sydney), made no further reference to contact with Tasmanian Aborigines. The activities of these two scientists are in marked contrast to all the maritime explorers before them, who (even at times without specific expertise) showed intense interest in the Indigenous peoples, and Humphrey's and Brown's failure in this respect reflects the attitude of the majority of administrators, scientists and settlers who followed them.

Observations of the *Mairremmener* by settlers during this early period before 1820 are also few in numbers. Not only was there an attitude of simply not wanting to

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[92] T. G. Vallance, D. T. Moore & E. W. Groves, *Nature's Investigator: The Diary of Robert Brown in Australia, 1801-1805*, Canberra: Australian Biological Resources Study, 2001, pp. 482, 483.
[93] Milligan, *Vocabulary,*. pp. 25, 34.
[94] Knopwood, *The Diaries,* p. 46; Vallance, 'The start of government science in Australia', p. 492.
[95] Vallance, et al., *Nature's Investigator,*. p. 517.
[96] *HRA*, series III, vol. I, p. 482. He [and his family] was 'Victualled as a Settler for 18 months'.

see the Indigenous people; the few who did observe them did so through the eyes of "civilized" Europeans and the epistemology of the Enlightenment. Savages, noble or otherwise, had to be raised to a civilized standard or allowed to vanish. One observer whose contact with Aborigines was greater than most, and who made an effort to record the culture in detail, was Jorgen Jorgenson, the notorious Danish-born 'protector' of Iceland; convict, constable, explorer and leader of a roving party during the Black War. Jorgenson's *Narrative of the Habits, Manners, and Customs of the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land,* was written between 1837 to 1840.[97] While Jorgenson was sometimes considered an unreliable reporter – demonstrated by A. L. Meston in tracing the routes of Jorgenson's explorations on the Central Plateau – as Plomley pointed out, 'he was an intelligent observer of the Aborigines in their near natural state'[98]; that is, at a time when their contact with the white colonizers was minimal, and acculturation had not occurred to any extent. He was, however, a creature of his time and place: as Plomley also noted 'His conclusions ... are not free from the bias of believing that progress, in the sense of the European psyche of property and labour, was all-important, and that the rights of a people who had no such belief have to give way before it.'[99] Jorgenson was a man of the Enlightenment. However, in relation to the history of the *Mairremmener* People, Jorgenson was in the right place; he spent many of his early years in Van Diemen's Land in the country of those People, at Oatlands for example, and on the Central Plateau. In addition, he demonstrated intense sympathy for the needs and plight of the Aborigines, even to the extent of proposing the creation of a reserve to Lieutenant-Governor Arthur in 1828,

> far up on the western side of the river Ouse, beyond Lake Fergus ... the grand place of rendezvous for the natives ... their most extensive hunting ground ... the excellence of the soil and superior feed, and the warmth of the climate, concur in rendering this track peculiarly adapted for all purposes of wandering and savage tribes.[100]

Jorgenson had, sometime before, compiled a vocabulary of Tasmanian Aboriginal languages, dividing them into four groups: eastern, western, southern and northern,

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[97] Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land,* pp.37-42 for the history of Jorgenson's manuscript. While the narrative in the Mitchell Library is known as 'the Braim manuscript', being contained in the papers of Archdeacon Thomas Henry Braim, Plomley 'firmly attributes' the work to Jorgenson (p. 40).

[98] p. 41.

[99] p. 43. This is precisely the place Robinson contacted the last of the *Mairremmener* People in December 1831, as noted in the Introduction above.

[100] Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines,* p. 35.

thus giving geographical locations for the 'tribes' that spoke those languages.[101] In linking language with geographical boundaries, Jorgenson was the first commentator to recognize that the Tasmanians were comprised of distinct socio-linguistic groups, and not one cohesive people.[102]

In general commentary Jorgenson noted a distinction between Aborigines of the east coast and the interior and those of the south and the west coast. The former 'had corrobories (merry makings), or dancing ... imitating the kangaroos and other animals to perfection.' While he claimed that they had no religious rites he was unsure if 'they entertain the slightest notion of [religion] whatsoever.' Yet, in noting the differences in funerary practices where some peoples practised cremation, others burial in hollow trees, he observed that the Aborigines would 'on all future occasions avoid going near such spots, and would rather go miles round than pass close to them.' He also noted beliefs in 'devils ... painted with red ochre', and a fear of travelling at night. Jorgenson discounted these practices, claiming that 'Some notion of malevolent material being in the shape of a man cannot be termed religion.'[103] In commenting on the *Mairremmener* in particular, Jorgenson observed the 'grand corrobory' at the location beyond the Ouse River mentioned above. In 1829, south of this location, on the Shannon River, Jorgenson discovered a grave marked by a spear tipped with a human bone, the body in the grave being covered by 'several layers of flat stone.' Jorgenson enquired of 'Mungo', his Aboriginal companion, as to the reasons for the spear and was told it was '"to fight with when he is asleep"', a justification which 'must entertain some faint notions of a future state.' A further practice, perhaps with religious connotations, was the carrying of one bone of a friend or relative. Jorgenson observed that 'The Chief of the Big River tribe kept as a relic his brother's skull ...' He ascribed the carrying of bones 'to avert danger.'[104]

Jorgenson also recorded the types of dwellings constructed by the different peoples, noting that on the west coast the huts resembled 'a bee hive ... perhaps 15 or

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[101] pp.32, 33.

[102] However, in making that judgment, Jorgenson lapses into the error of pan-Tasmanianism when he claims that '"Mannalargunah [Mannalargenna]" ... was considered the principal chief of the whole island ...' p. 52.

[103] pp. 54, 67.

[104] Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines,* pp. 57,68, 69. The Ouse River locality is that recommended by Jorgenson as an appropriate place for a 'reserve', as noted above. See chapter seven for more information on the Aboriginal 'Mungo'.

16 feet in length, and about 12 feet in breadth ... built and thatched with great skill'. In these huts were generally found 'an assemblage of rude sketches, representing birds, beasts, human forms etc, for the most part tolerably well executed.' These substantial dwellings were compared with 'temporary wigwams of bark, just large enough for two or three persons to rest in for a night' on the east coast and in the interior.[105] Jorgensen noted that, in all cases, dwellings were situated near hunting grounds or adjacent to sources of marine foods such as shellfish, and fireplaces and middens were often within or near the dwellings. On the question of the use of sea craft, Jorgenson claimed that 'the natives ... made no use of canoes ... on the western coast, they availed themselves of roughly constructed rafts made of some dead wood ... on the southern coast ... they made rafts composed of stringy bark, each of which required two or three tons ... the head and stern which were tied as to be sharp pointed.'[106] The weapons of the Aborigines 'were of rude construction, consisting only of spears and waddies, not pointed with bone, or anything sharp [and] thrown without the help of a wamara [sic]'[107] As noted in chapter one, Jorgenson considered Aborigines were able to make fire by friction, but because the materials required were not always available, carried firesticks from place to place. He speculated on the possible religious nature of carrying fire, and its origin in coming down 'from heaven' in the form of lightning, claiming that 'the fiction ... will deviate very little from the truth.' Cooking fires were generally small, emitting thin wisps of smoke, distinguishing them from the larger fires of the white invaders. Within a band several fires were constructed outside the huts of each family group, which 'seldom exceeded four in number'. Food, mainly kangaroo and opossum, was 'half broiled' directly on the fire, and devoured 'with a most voracious appetite'. [108] Women were assigned the task of catching possums, climbing trees with the aid of a sliding grass rope and the notching of the tree at appropriate intervals. Other foods included swans, and vegetables such as '*wattalapee* or *pomalle* ... the native potatoe', and the kangaroo apple.[109]

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[105] pp. 57, 58.
[106] p. 54.
[107] p. 57, but note the comment on the spear found at the Shannon River grave, above.
[108] p. 56.
[109] Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines,* pp. 55, 56. As a sailor, Jorgenson probably had firm views on what would constitute a "canoe".

As to 'character and disposition' of the Aborigines, Jorgenson noted the 'periodical, and well authenticated ... charges of treachery and ingratitude' and indiscriminate slaughter under circumstances of great barbarity and cruelty' ascribed to them. In support of this premise, he cited cases in 1826 and 1827 of unprovoked robberies and murders on the Central Plateau and in the Midlands, and particularly the murders of Captain Bartholomew Thomas and his overseer Parker at Port Sorell in 1831. He also noted difficulties encountered by Robinson during the conciliatory missions. He conceded, however, that in some instances motives of revenge for rape of women and other violence perpetrated on the Aborigines were causes of such indiscriminate acts. On the other hand he saw them as 'a timid race', fleeing before 'a single man daringly rushing forward with a large club in his hand.' [110] Jorgenson briefly noted the existence of internecine warfare, giving the example of 'Walloa's' [Walyer's] threats to north west Aborigines, resulting in warfare which 'carried off great numbers.'[111] On the issue of conjugal relations, Jorgenson claimed no marriage ceremonies were performed, partners agreeing only to form a connection. These connections were exogamous and monogamous. He noted that 'An Aboriginal female of the Port Davey Blacks proceeded seventy miles ... to seek a husband in preference to any of her own kindred or friends.' Adultery was rare, and punishment for offenders severe.[112] He also claimed that the 'Aborigines have an utter aversion to a liar', quoting the example of 'Montilangana [Moulteherlargener or Maultehelargener]', the Chief of the Stony Creek tribe, in truthfully relating to Robinson the instances of the killing of whites.[113]

The majority of these observations relate to the People who Jorgenson came into direct contact with; that is, the *Mairremmener* of the east coast and the Central Plateau; the so-called Oyster Bay and Big River 'tribes'. Some observations relied on the reports of other early settlers; Thomas Anstey for example, or on contemporary newspaper reports; and many relied on the journals of George Augustus Robinson. The similarity of Jorgenson's observations to those of Robinson's is marked, and confirmed the nature of *Mairremmener* culture as discussed in chapter one above, at least at the time and the places where he made the observations. In this regard, by the

[110] pp. 50, 51, 55, 70-72.
[111] pp. 72, 73.
[112] p. 55.
[113] p. 55.

1820s contacts between the Aborigines of the east coast and the British settlers had taken place, albeit with no great frequency. But the possibility of a degree of acculturation was present. It is particularly noteworthy that Jorgenson was ahead of his time in connecting language and place to differentiate between the socio-cultural groups of Tasmania.

A final issue canvassed by Jorgenson was that of the Aboriginal population of Van Diemen's Land, both at the time of first settlement, and by 1830, when the worst of the clashes between colonizers and colonized were taking place. He claimed that it might 'without exaggeration be computed at from two to three thousand' in 1802, reduced to perhaps five hundred in 1830, 'The Port Davey, the Western, the Cape Grim, the Oyster Bay, the Big River, Sorell and Stoney Creek tribes alone [amounting] upwards of four hundred and fifty'.[114] Having considerable knowledge of the movements of the various bands, he pointed out that 'a single tribe had extended their depredations all over the colony from north to south and from eastwards to the most western of the settlement'. He was emphasising the mobility of the Aborigines, and the likely double counting of numbers as the result of that mobility. It is a well-made point which should be taken into account in population estimates made from the earliest observations. The movements of bands from the east coast to the Central Plateau, for example, could very likely have resulted in an exaggeration of population numbers as the result of double-counting.

Other settlers did attempt to record the details of Tasmanian Aboriginal culture. Colonists such as William Charles Wentworth, Charles Jeffrey and David Burn and the surveyor George Evans all wrote books descriptive of Van Diemen's Land, mostly with the intent of encouraging immigration to the new colony.[115] All carried brief descriptions of the Aboriginal population, notable for their failure to distinguish between the various socio-linguistic groups, and for presenting a picture of

[114] Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines,* p. 70.
[115] W. C. Wentworth, *Statistical, Historical, and Political Description of the Colony of New South Wales and its Independent Settlements in Van Diemen's Land with a Particular Enumeration of the Advatages Which These Colonies Offer for Emigration ...*, London: G. & W. B. Whittaker, 1819; C. Jeffreys, *Geographical and Descriptive Delineations of the Island of Van Diemen's Land,* London: J. M. Richardson, 1820; Burn, *A Picture of Van Diemen's Land.*; G. W. Evans, *A Geographical, Historical, and Topographical Description of Van Diemen's Land with Important Hints to Emigrants ...*, London: John Souter, 1822.

a 'barbarous and uncivilized' people. Evans, of all the authors, had in his role as Deputy Surveyor-General the greatest opportunity to observe the Aborigines: instead he chose to use a large excerpt from Jeffreys' text in describing them. The Evans-Jeffreys' observations included descriptions of weapons, canoes and huts, and mentioned a spirituality based on an 'imagined deity'. The text expanded on the interaction between sealers, bushrangers and Aboriginal women, and the harsh treatment meted out to the latter, and instances of infanticide involving mixed-race children. They noted that the Aborigines did not practice infanticide, but 'appeared to take precautions to prevent excessive population' by selling or disposing of their females.[116] The information all these authors provided added little to that already known, and the failure to distinguish between the socio-linguistic groups lessened the value of the observations when seeking knowledge of the culture of a particular group such as the *Mairremmener*. Wentworth's observations covered a mere three pages, probably demonstrating his lack of significant (or any) contact with the Tasmanians.[117] David Burn, whose mother obtained land grants on the Clyde River in 1824, had the opportunity to observe the Aborigines on the Central Plateau, but confined his descriptions of them to the conflict with the settlers, and therefore added little to the knowledge of the culture of the People.[118] James Kelly was another early settler who contributed limited observations of Aboriginal culture, and who, during a circumnavigation of Van Diemen's Land in 1815, provided a picture of the peoples of the west, north-west and north-east coasts. However Kelly only briefly visited the country of the *Mairremmener*, and made no observations of those People.[119]

Dr James Ross, the editor of *The Hobart Town Almanack*, settled on the Shannon River in 1823. In 1830, he published his recollections of an excursion to Lake Echo, probably in the year he settled on the Shannon.[120] His short report is valuable in its observations of the activities of Aborigines on the Central Plateau at a time when limited contact had taken place. These people were probably of the

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[116] Evans, pp. 10-24. The question of infanticide was raised by Roth, *The Aborigines of Tasmania,* pp. 162, 163. Quoting R. H. Davies, C. P. T. Laplace and James Erskine Calder, Roth dismissed the existence of infanticide, but pointed to evidence of abandonment of infants due to 'peculiar exigencies of their state.' This issue is further canvassed below, where the role of women in Tasmanian Aboriginal society is discussed.

[117] Wentworth, *Statistical Description,* pp. 115-117.

[118] Burn, *A Picture of Van Diemen's Land,* pp. 22-26, 129.

[119] Calder, *The Circumnavigations of Van Diemen's Land,* p. 34.

[120] Ross, *Dr. Ross's Recollections of a Short Excursion to Lake Echo.*

Laimairremener band, known to occupy the country on the upper Ouse River. For example, Ross noted the methods of using fire to promote regrowth; the presence of a large Aboriginal band on the Bashan Plains, where he observed the use of ochre and cockatoo feathers as adornments; the family groups and their the methods of cooking; and a 'village' of seventeen Aboriginal huts on the Shannon River and the manner in which they were constructed (resembling 'a tea cup broken in half and set upon its mouth'). The huts had 'rude drawings of human figures, of circles and squares scratched on the inner side of the bark.'[121] He also observed the use of the cider tree to produce a fermented liquor, as also noted in chapter one above. Given the relatively brief pamphlet he produced, Ross managed to record a good measure of Aboriginal culture on the Central Plateau.

Some detail of Aboriginal culture on the east coast was also published in the report of the Aborigines Committee dated 19 March 1830.[122] Gilbert Robertson, a Coal River settler, one-time editor of the *Colonist* newspaper, and the leader of a roving party chasing the Aborigines in 1828, testified among other things that 'the Natives do not move by night; they are afraid of the moon'; and that 'the Oyster Bay natives and the Big River natives are of the same tribe; they are hostile to the northern tribes to which Umarow belongs'. Robertson also noted 'the Natives ... recover the dead bodies of such as are killed ... and put them in hollow trees.'[123] Robertson was sympathetic to the plight of the east coast people, as demonstrated by his support of Umarrah before Lieutenant-Governor Arthur at an Executive Council meeting in 1829.[124] Roderic O'Connor, the Inspector of Roads and Bridges, and previously a

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[121] Ross, pp. 28, 29, 31-36, 51, 52. As noted in chapter one, the size of the village is significant. The sixty or more Aborigines at the site probably represented more than one band, indicating the possibility of the presence of an east coast band as well. Ross was accompanied by a 'friend' and two convicts, one convict being the notorious "Carrots" – Thomas [or James] Carrett (*per* ship *Calcutta,* 1803). Marie Fels repeated the claim of the Aborigines' Committee (testimony of James Hobbs) that Carrots 'once cut off a native man's head at Oyster Bay, and made his wife hang it around her neck and carry it as a plaything'. M. Fels, 'Culture Contact in the County of Buckinghamshire, Van Diemen's Land 1803-11', Tasmanian *Historical Research Association,* Vol. 29 (2), 1982, pp. 60, 70. Fels, in her biography attached to the article, does not list Carrett's service with Ross in 1823 (p. 70). The 'friend' was surveyor Thomas Scott.

[122] *Copies of All Correspondence between Lieutenant Governor Arthur,* pp. 35-55.

[123] p. 48. 'Umarow' [Umarrah] was an elder of the *Leterremairrener* People, captured by Robertson in November 1828, and later assigned to Robertson's roving party. He also joined G. A. Robinson on the conciliatory missions.

[124] See report in H. Melville, *The History of the Island of Van Diemen's Land from the year1824 to 1835 inclusive, to Which is Added a Few Words on Prison Discipline,* London: Smith & Elder, 1835, pp. 85-88.

Commissioner of Survey and Valuation, advised the Aborigines Committee that 'wars continue among [the Aborigines]'; that they did not act in concert, but were 'as tenacious of their hunting-grounds as the settlers are of their farms.'[125] William Brodribb advised the Committee of a place 'in the Campbell Town district, where the Natives go to obtain flint'; that 'the Native women do not accompany small parties'; and that he had 'seen fifty Natives together.'[126] Among those testifying to the Committee were several settlers who arrived in 1804, including Knopwood, Robert Evans and Thomas Stocker, all claiming that the Aborigines were at Risdon Cove in 1804 for a 'Corrobberry', when they were fired on by the marines. Edward White's testimony on this event was previously noted in Chapter one.[127] James Hobbs thought 'the Oyster Bay and the Big River tribe are connected' and he 'has heard of the Natives having 300 or 400 dogs with a tribe'.[128]

Without doubt, the most comprehensive body of ethnographic information on the Tasmanians is contained in George Augustus Robinson's journals; particularly those written during the so-called 'conciliatory missions' between 1830 and 1834. Many of Robinson's observations have been noted above and in chapter one. The difficulties with those observations stem from first, the time when he had the most contact with the *Mairremmener* People; that is, from 1829, when few remained: and secondly, those that he did contact had had years of acculturation.[129] On the other hand, although not a trained scientist, Robinson was one of a handful of settlers who spoke several Tasmanian languages with a high degree of comprehension, coupled with a empathy towards the People.[130] In his journeys on the conciliatory missions he was always accompanied by members of different bands, and constantly engaged them in discussion on their culture. Further, he actively lived among them, sharing

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[125] *Copies of All Correspondence Between Lieutenant Governor Arthur,* p. 55.

[126] p. 52. The 'flint', probably chert or hornfels, is found in outcrops throughout the Eastern Tiers: in particular, in the stone quarries on the ridges above the Little Swanport River in the Buckland Military Training Area, an Aboriginal 'road' from the East Coast to the Central Plateau, as noted in chapter one.

[127] pp. 52, 53, 54.

[128] p. 50. Hobbs circumnavigated Van Diemen's Land in 1824, and gained some knowledge of the coastal Aboriginal bands during this expedition: Calder, *The Circumnavigations of Van Diemen's Land in 1815 by James Kelly and in 1824 by James Hobbs.*

[129] Note, for example, James Hobbs' comment on the Aborigines' use of dogs.

[130] The *Hobart Town Gazette*, in reporting the proceedings at the public meeting held on 22 September 1830 to consider the appointment of a 'town guard' in Hobart as part of the Line Campaign, noted Mr. [Charles? or James?] Hackett as commenting that 'He did not think there were 5 persons on the island who could converse with or make themselves understood by them. Had Van Diemen's Land been colonised by Frenchmen, the case would have been very different.' *HTG*, 25 September 1830. James Hackett may have been the owner of a Hobart distillery (Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* p.1031)

their huts and their food. Even without scientific training Robinson was in part following Degérando's prescription for successful anthropological study: the ability to learn and speak the language, and to spend considerable time among the subjects. His failure in terms of Degérando's dictum was the judging of Aboriginal customs by 'inappropriate European analogies', particularly so in Robinson's case, given his evangelical beliefs.

Apart from his observations considered in preceding chapters, Robinson noted the general practice of exogamy in conjugal partnerships, including the stealing of women from other bands; internecine wars over women, and wars over cheating while trading in ochre and shell necklaces; some evidence of revenge killings between bands; fratricide in order to prevent conjugal relationships; and some evidence of polygamy.[131] While not all these observations related to the *Mairremmener* People, those that did added to Robinson's observations on the close relationship between the Big River and Oyster Bay 'tribes'; the use of 'catamarans' to gain access to the off-shore islands; evidence of a cosmology and spirituality; firemaking, the use of fire and weather forecasting ability; and funerary practices. Taken together, these observations painted an accurate picture of the culture of the People. In addition, Robinson's observations on the manufacture and use of weapons (spears, waddies) and stone tools and implements; items of dress; the importance of ochre, cicatrices and items of personal adornment such as shell necklaces; the foods hunted and gathered and the methods of food preparation; the treatment of injuries and illnesses; the nature of habitations (in particular, the differences between the substantial huts of the west coast, and the temporary structure of the east coast and the Central Plateau); and finally the location and importance of the cultural roads of these nomadic people, all combined to present a complete picture of *Mairremmener* society at the time of first contact with the British colonizers. Robinson's observations of the effects of colonization upon the *Mairremmener* recorded both in the *Friendly Mission* journals and in his journals of his time as superintendent of Wybalenna settlement on Flinders Island, are discussed in chapter seven.

[131] Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* pp. 172, 312, 554, 888, 977, 257, 887, 560, 742.

An important issue canvassed by most observers from the maritime explorers onwards was that of the role and treatment of women in Tasmanian societies. These observations were made by European men whose views were undoubtedly influenced by male attitudes towards women in their own societies. Most observers presented the women as subservient, often maltreated partners of sometimes-brutal men, observations which, as Shayne Breen pointed out, had parallels in western cultures, where 'harsh treatment and a secondary status for women [were] characteristic.'[132] For example, Labillardiere noted Aboriginal women on Bruny Island carrying out the difficult work of diving for crustaceans and shellfish, and then returning to their fires to feed their men and children the best of the cooked food, while waiting to be given the lesser portions for themselves. The great skills of women in seal-hunting were observed by other explorers.[133] The exclusive role of women as gatherers, sourcing the vegetables and fruits listed above which were used as foods, was universally noted by all observers. While the upper classes of French society to which Labillardiere belonged had servants to carry out domestic chores, women of the lower classes in France prepared and served meals in much the same manner as did the *Nuennone* – obtaining the ingredients, cooking and serving food to their menfolk and children while they themselves waited in turn. The French explorers, whose primary contact was with the *Nuennone* People of Bruny Island and the *Lyluequonny* People of the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, did however note the reluctance of the male Aborigines to expose their women to contact. Labillardiere, d'Auribeau and Raoul, among others, all noted the absence of women (and children) in groups first encountered.[134] At meal times, the explorers observed that the women retired behind the men while they ate at the fire with the visitors.[135] These actions were clearly efforts to protect the women from perceived danger, a protective instinct not out of place in Western societies.

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[132] S. Breen, 'Re-inventing social evolution', *Whitewash: on Keith Windschuttle's Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, R. Manne (ed), Melbourne: Black Inc. Agenda, 2003, p. 148.

[133] Labillardiere in Plomley & Bernier, *The General, op. cit.* p, 295. The skill of Aboriginal women in hunting seals was noted by James Kelly, when, on 'King George's Island' (George Rock) off the north east coast of Van Diemen's Land, he observed six women obtain seals by imitating the actions of the animal, laying on the rocks among them and 'imitating every movement ... for nearly and hour', before clubbing and killing their prey. Kelly described the delight of the women at their success, and the resultant feast and celebration. Calder, *The Circumnavigations of Van Diemen's Land*, pp. 30, 31.

[134] Labillardiere, pp. 274, 285, 305.

[135] Péron in Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition*, p. 33.

While accusations of brutality and violence towards women have been levelled at the Tasmanians, the majority of the evidence for this comes from George Augustus Robinson's journals, with some support from other early settlers, and a few earlier reports from the maritime explorers where cicatrices were possibly taken to be scars from abuse.[136] Robinson recounted stories of physical abuse or murder of Aboriginal women by their men, sometimes during sexual encounters, other times from jealousy or fratricide.[137] One informant – Wooraddy of the *Nuennone*, who was Robinson's long term companion on the missions – recounted a tale of murder and revenge, when he raped and killed his brother's wife who had (in company with other women), first killed his brother.[138] By that standard, gender had little bearing on the inflictors of violence. Robinson's journals contained numerous stories of both sexes engaged in violent conflict with each other, not unlike the violence between men and women in contemporary Western societies.

Other colonial observers who recorded violence by Aboriginal men against their women included George Evans and Charles Jeffreys, whose texts on Van Diemen's Land were primarily aimed at intending immigrants to the new colony, as mentioned above. The specific instance of brutality and infanticide mentioned by both authors involved a harrowing relationship between an Aboriginal women and a sealer; other accusations of brutality towards the women by Aboriginal men are general, without any specific details. For example, Evans, quoting Jeffreys, claimed 'these people appear to take precautions to prevent excessive population. With this in view they are frequently known to sell or otherwise dispose of their females'. No direct evidence of these practices, hinting as they do at infanticide and trade in women, were provided.[139] Jorgenson, whose recorded contact with the Aboriginal population was more extensive than any other colonial observer apart from Robinson, expressed his disagreement with Evans' and Jeffreys' opinions apart from the relations between Bass Strait sealers and the Aboriginal women. Jorgenson conceded that the women

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[136] Roth, *The Aborigines of Tasmania,* p. 44. Roth had Péron claiming that 'They were nearly all covered with scars, the miserable results of the bad treatment of their brutal husbands'; *cf.* Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition,* pp. 200, 201. Plomley recorded Péron's observations as 'minor abrasions' from pushing through the bush, and noted that he did not 'give a clue to the nature of these supposed marks of ill-treatment.'

[137] Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* pp. 280, 529, 560, for example.

[138] This Shakespearean tale is in Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* p. 887.

[139] Evans, *A Geographical, Historical, and Topographical Description of Van Diemen's Land,*. p. 21. The woman was 'Bong' [Bung] – Woretermoeteyenner of *Pinterrairer* People.

may have been roughly treated by their Aboriginal partners, but not to the extent of their sufferings under the sealers.[140] The stories of the brutal treatment of women were also often perpetuated by hearsay. Henry Widowson, writing in 1829, claimed that 'I have also heard from individuals who have visited New South Wales, that it is not uncommon to see a poor woman, almost beaten to death by her lover, previous to his marrying her.'[141] These observations were made by men generally from middle or upper classes of Western societies, whose views of lower-class women in those societies were both critical and harsh. Further, observations of subservient Aboriginal women trailing the dominant males, and the rough treatment supposedly accorded to them, could easily be equated with the brutal and nasty life of the London poor, and moral judgments of the treatment of poor women in their own societies were easily transferred onto the 'savage', uncivilized people of Van Diemen's Land. But as Breen also pointed out, apart from much hearsay, 'No substantial evidence exists to show that Aboriginal men chronically abused their women.'[142] In addition, all observers from the first maritime explorers to the early settlers noted the kindly, loving manner in which Aboriginal children were treated within their respective bands, and images of coherent, peaceful family groups were often portrayed.[143] Life as a nomad was, without doubt, harsh and unforgiving, especially in the colder Tasmanian climate; and life for Aboriginal women was, at times, made even harsher by the demands of their men in food quest and in conjugal relations. The above comments on Aboriginal women were (and are) generally applied to all Tasmanian Peoples, and little was specifically recorded on women within the *Mairremmener* bands. However, the claims that life was endemically brutal for the women patently overstate the case; family life provided a welcome relief from the harshness of the nomadic existence. Some evidence for these harmonious relations can be found in the illustrations of the artist Piron of the d'Entrecasteaux expedition in 1793, and of the artists Petit and

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[140] Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land,* p. 127.

[141] H. Widowson, *Present State of Van Diemen's Land Comprising an Account of its Agricultural Capabilities. With Observations on the Present State of Farming, &c. &c. Pursued in that Colony: and Other Important Matters Connected with Emigration,* London: S. Robinson, 1829, p. 188. Widowson was formerly an agent of the Van Diemen's Land Company, and his writings were aimed at intending immigrants.

[142] S. Breen, *Whitewash,* p. 148.

[143] For example, the journal of Louis-Henry Freycinet, an ensign on the Baudin expedition in 1802, sat down at camp fire at Port Cygnet with an Aboriginal family group 'who welcomed [him] with ... friendship and confidence'. The group consisted of 'an old man and his wife, a young man and his wife, a young girl, two small boys, and two small girls, one of whom was at the breast ... they appeared to be gentle and very fond of their children.' Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition, op. cit.* p. 113.

Lesueur of the Baudin expedition of 1802.[144] The later actions of the colonizers (and especially the stockkeepers and escaped convicts) which affected Aboriginal women, together with the depredations of the Bass Strait sealers, will be discussed in following chapters.

Finally, the issue of internecine fighting between bands or between socio-linguistic groups was only briefly noted by Jorgenson and Robinson, perhaps an indication that infrequent contact took place, especially between peoples speaking different languages. Many of the references in Robinson's journals concern fights over women, or minor squabbles, sometimes over property, as in an instance where a murder and wounding drove off the owners of a number of dogs, which were then taken by the aggressors.[145] Jorgenson refers to these fights as 'internecine feuds', and claimed that they 'carried off great numbers.'[146] Robinson does, however, note hearsay of 'wars' between bands. In September 1831, while on the mission to gather the remnant *Mairremmener* bands, he noted that 'Most of them have scars which had been inflicted in their wars with other nations or tribes.' On 6 December 1831, he noted that Mannalargenna's son was reputed to have been 'very expert in war and had oft put to flight all that was opposed to him'.[147] In June 1834, Robinson recorded the great storyteller Wooraddy of the *Nuennone* relating a tale of revenge over the *Melukehedee* People for the murder of his brother, where his band 'fell upon [the *Melukehedee*] and killed a great number' when they came to the Huon River to collect eggs.[148] It is likely that the European concept of war was very different from that of the Tasmanians, and Jorgenson's definition of the fights as feuds was closer to the mark, although James Erskine Calder, when attempting to calculate the population of Tasmanians killed during the period 1803 to 1835, claimed 'at least 6,000 must have died at their own encampments, from causes not induced by war, except tribal wars.

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[144] For example, the illustration by Piron of a family group in Plomley, facing p. 177; illustrations by Petit or Lesueur in Plomley & Bernier, *The General,* pp. 275, 277.
[145] Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* p. 538. European dogs were prized possessions of the Tasmanians; p. 264, 653; Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines,* pp. 52, 53.
[146] p. 72.
[147] Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* pp. 424, 543. Mannalargenna's son was apparently killed by Montpelliater, a leader of the *Lairmairrener* Band, the Big River People.
[148] p. 887.

These latter, taken singly, though not very bloody, produced collectively a large number of deaths.'[149]

Taken together, all the ethnographic observations of the explorers and the British settlers provide a picture of a vibrant society of east coast Aborigines at the time of colonization, and support the archaeological evidence of bands, band populations and affiliations. The image is one of the *Mairremmener* as a nomadic People with all the facilities necessary to pursue their way of life – weapons and tools, minimalist in form, but appropriately adapted for hunting and gathering within their band territory; the skills and abilities necessary to sustain and enhance their lives; and a dynamic cultural life embodying a cosmology and a spirituality, based upon an exclusive domain – "country' – a cultural landscape accessed by well-developed roads which also provided extensive trade routes in spiritual goods and necessities. They led a satisfying family life where continuity of generations was maintained by exogamy, women were respected and protected and children cherished. Their diet was varied and their foods were plentiful, and they presented as a healthy, physically well-developed People. While internecine wars between bands did occur, the People were generally peaceful and contained within their own society and culture. The relative invisibility of the *Mairremmener* People in the early years of settlement preserved this nomadic hunting and gathering culture from the depredations of the settlers. After 1820, when the desirable savannah and open sclerophyll forests of the Midlands were appropriated by the colonizers and the traditional Aboriginal roads were obstructed and subsumed into private, jealously-guarded and protected properties, the nomadic culture of the People could not be sustained and violent conflict between colonizers and colonized ensued. Finally, a successful society was lost.

The fate of the *Mairremmener* was one shared by the indigenous peoples of other colonized lands, and, in the following chapter, the cultural trait of nomadism will be generally considered, together with the effect of imperialism on other nomadic societies.

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[149] Calder, *Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits, &c,* p. 25. Calder was perhaps repeating Jorgenson's observation.

Chapter Three

Happy wanderers: nomadism as a cultural trait

Those who travel are emigrants ... nomads don't want to leave, because they grip hold of the earth, their land.

Gilles Deleuze[1]

Developing a culture: adaptation by nomadic hunter-gatherers

Chapters one and two explicated the culture of the Tasmanians as it had developed and adapted over millennia following the southern migrations from the Australian landmass. The sources used were primarily the archaeological and anthropological research and linguistic analysis carried out by European scientists, from the early maritime explorations of the eighteenth century through to modern investigations using sophisticated scientific techniques. The hypotheses developed from those investigations must therefore be seen in a European context; that is, they were used to judge the level of "civilization" of the Tasmanians in terms of Western values. It was concluded that the Tasmanian societies were uncivilized and would therefore benefit from cultural change, raising them to a standard at or near that of the colonizers; an imperial conceit that persisted throughout the Age of Empire.

However, the investigations also demonstrated that the Tasmanians had carefully adapted their cultures to maximise their way of life within the constraints of the ecology of their country. The adaptations bringing cultural change were considered and often innovative, and always engendered by the societies themselves, resulting in an enduring and successful existence. Cultural change takes a number of forms. Primarily, it occurs perforce in line with environmental and ecological changes in climate and biota. These are changes of necessity, made for the purpose of societal maintenance and growth. Cultural change can also occur through incorporation of parts of other cultures; a voluntarily adaptation on the part of a society where advantages are perceived in such change. Finally, and often as a deliberate part of the colonial process, indigenous cultures were subjected to directed or forced change by the colonizers; societal acculturation against the will of those societies.

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[1] Deleuze quoted in J. Sellars (ed), *Nomadic Trajectories*, Warwick Journal of Philosophy, Coventry: University of Warwick, 1998, p. 4.

This chapter considers these issues in three ways: first, it defines nomadism, particularly as the prime cultural trait of some hunting and gathering societies, and considers the forms of cultural change. Secondly, it examines the effects of the process of colonization upon the culture of the nomadic hunter-gatherers of Van Diemen's Land. Thirdly, for the purpose of comparison, it considers two other nomadic hunting and gathering societies on different continents, both of which were subject to invasion, colonization and dispossession, and finally, to degrees of acculturation. By considering these issues, in the chapters that follow – chapters that record the invasion and colonization of Van Diemen's Land by the British, and the resulting demise of *Mairremmener* society – the devastating effects of directed or forced cultural change are placed in context.

Nomadism defined: cultural adaptation by hunter-gatherers.

In April 1966 an important symposium was held in Chicago. Entitled 'Man the Hunter', the symposium gathered together seventy-five scholars from all over the globe, all eminent scientists in anthropology, human biology, archaeology, demography and ecology. The papers delivered drew on then recent data and studies of past and contemporary hunter-gatherer societies and aimed at clarifying conceptual issues on 'a way of life [that] has been the most successful and persistent adaptation man has ever achieved.'[2] The papers, once revised, were published in the volume *Man the Hunter* edited by Richard B. Lee and Irven DeVore, and formed a base for further study of hunter-gatherer peoples from prehistoric times to the present age.

An assumption made concerning hunter-gatherers – a 'trial formulation' of the views of Lee and DeVore – was that they lived their lives in a *nomadic style*; that 'they lived in small groups ... move[d] around a lot ... [and] each local group is associated with a geographical range.'[3] These generalisations, while intended only as an 'organizational base line', tended to mislead in that it could be assumed all hunter-gatherers were nomads, and vice versa. However, as noted later in the symposium papers, typologies such as 'semi-nomadic' and 'settled' were applied to some hunter-gather peoples. Hitoshi Watanabe noted the 'wide variety observed in patterns of

[2] R. B. Lee & I. DeVore in *Man the Hunter*, p.3. The editors estimated that for 99 per cent of the time 'Cultural Man' had been on earth he had lived as a hunter-gather. p.3.
[3] p.11.

residential shift', and constructed a spectrum of *stability*, with ethnographic examples to illustrate the point.[4] Alain Telstart suggested an even more definitive typology – extremely nomadic 'mounted hunter-gathers'; sedentary 'storing hunter-gatherers'; 'nonstoring, sedentary hunter-gatherers'; and nomadic hunter-gatherers of three subtypes.[5] In a later critical examination of the literature, Fred Myers pointed to structuralist and Marxist approaches which modelled the social and economic organization of the groups, and to humanistic accounts which had 'an interest in exploring the "cultural" dimensions of hunter-gatherer life.', as contrasted to comparative research.[6] In a similar commentary, Harry Lourandos emphasised this diversity in pointing out that hunter-gatherer societies incorporated 'more complex social formations [than the traditional view of small-scale, mobile egalitarian societies]; high levels of sendentism; large population sizes and densities; significant levels of surplus and storage; extensive social networks; and had considerable impact on land and resources.'[7] Nurit Bird-David noted the obvious conclusion to be drawn from these contested meanings; that is there is a 'great diversity among the hunter-gatherers themselves' making *the composition and activities* of the diverse groups a more useful focus of scholarship, rather than the attempts at comparative typology. This view is reinforced by Panter-Brick, Layton and Rowley-Conwy in placing emphasis on 'the *range of behaviours* and the *flexibility* of human groups, not uniformity.'[8]

Given that the nexus between nomadism and hunting and gathering is far from absolute, the apposite question when examining any hunter-gatherer society is "What was the extent of residential shift?" The extent and nature of the mobility of hunter-gatherer societies (conditions axiomatic in those societies by the very demands of food quest alone) are the basic markers of nomadism. Seasonal migrations for the purposes of hunting or for foraging for vegetables and other plants were a common

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[4] pp. 69, 70. My emphasis.
[5] A. Testart, cited in A. Barnard, 'Contemporary Hunter-Gatherers: Current Theoretical Issues in Ecology and Social Organization', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 12, (1983), pp.206, 207.
[6] Fred R. Myers, 'Critical Trends in the Study of Hunter-Gatherers' *Annual Review of Anthropology,* vol. 17, (1988), pp. 268-276.
[7] H. Lourandos, 'Archaeology of Hunter-Gatherer Societies', *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*, p.7078.
[8] N. Bird-David, 'Hunting and Gathering Societies in Anthropology', *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences,* p.7083. C. Panter-Brick, R.H. Layton & P. Rowley-Conwy' 'Lines of enquiry', *Hunter-Gatherers: An Interdisciplinary Perspective*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001, p.6.

denominator among many hunter-gatherers. Yet many such societies engaged in seasonal migrations from a permanent base, to which they returned when the food quest was completed. Other societies, pastoralist in form, engaged in nomadic seasonal migrations by moving their herd animals to distant pastures. Further, regular migrations may or may not have been connected directly with seasons, or even with food quest, as discussed previously in Chapter two, and under. In Tasmania, of the various socio-linguist groups forming the Indigenous population of the island prior to their removal and exile after British invasion and settlement, at least two could properly be described as sedentary or semi-sedentary in that they developed permanent structures – 'villages' – from where they hunted and foraged. The structures were well-built weather-proofed huts in the fashion of those constructed in the south-east of the Australian mainland.[9] The climate of the country of one particular people – the *Lowreenne* or West Coast People – was inclement and probably a factor in the need for a degree of permanency, but the same point could equally be made in respect of other groups on the island where no such villages were constructed. The *Tommeginne* People of the North West also constructed substantial huts congregated into villages, but adopted a seminomadic lifestyle, moving seasonally between villages.[10]

However, defining 'nomadism' involves more than adopting an economic explanation; that is, seasonal migrations in quest of food or even for trade purposes. Many aboriginal peoples lived and ranged across lands that contained abundant food resources – both perennial and seasonal – to the extent that a sedentary lifestyle could easily have been maintained. There are deeper cultural reasons beyond the economic that propelled regular migrations along well-defined pathways or "roads", established over millennia. Isabel McBryde, for example, noted the extensive exchange linkages in Aboriginal Australia, linkages she termed 'cultural landscapes'– trading routes with social and ritual as well as economic purposes; routes of 'symbolic significance' where

> the values and the meanings of the items and their places of origin, and the spiritual significance of the journeys to source where items are so acquired

[9] For example: Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 156: 'Passed through a native village: the huts had a neat appearance and were surrounded by native fig trees.' For a description of the type of construction, see p.144.

[10] I. McFarlane, *Aboriginal Society in North West Tasmania: Dispossession and Genocide*, PhD Thesis, University of Tasmania, October 2002, pp. 25, 26.

drove the system.[11] In 1949 anthropologist Donald Thomson noted in respect of Central Australian Aborigines, that

> it is the preparation for a visit to relatives within the ceremonial exchange cycle to discharge his obligations, the *journey*, the ritual, the formalities ... on arriving ... the niceties of behaviour and etiquette, rather than the ... goods themselves that he values.[12]

In examining nomadism in historic hunter-gatherer societies the basic questions that need to be posed are, firstly, were they truly nomadic or was the residential shift involved of a temporary nature. Secondly, was nomadism an "all-of-culture" trait, a trait more than food quest; that is, a determinant of the societies as a whole.

The word "nomad" is from the Greek root *némõ* – to deal out, dispense or distribute. In distinguishing between the city-state (the *polis*) and the surrounding rural areas, the word *nomos* was applied to those outer areas, meaning "pastures or steppes". *Némõ*, the root, was applied to the herdsmen on the steppes.[13] In everyday English usage the word came to mean "wanderer": in anthropological usage it carried the more particular meaning of 'group of people without fixed habitation.'[14] The word gained a pejorative meaning in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when stadial theories of societal development were first proposed. In particular, the theories of the philosopher and political economist Adam Smith and the Scottish philosopher Adam Ferguson gained scientific support. Ferguson hypothesised a dynamism in human societies along a spectrum of change from 'savagery' to 'barbarism' to 'civilization'[15] In the age of exploration that followed, explorers and anthropologists, noting the apparent rootless, wandering nature of the indigenous peoples of "discovered" lands and their lack of the accoutrements of (civilized) Western societies, applied the term "nomad" to them in the proper sense of lacking fixed habitations. However, in a popular sense the word rapidly became associated with "savage", carrying all the colloquial meanings attached to that word; primitive, fierce, cruel, brutal for example. In the age of Empire this pejorative meaning was to have drastic consequences for the aborigines of the colonized lands. The use of the term persists, both in its scientific

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[11] I. McBryde, 'The cultural landscapes of Aboriginal long distance exchange systems, p.9.
[12] Thomson, quoted in J. Mulvaney, '... these Aboriginal lines of travel', *Historic Environment*, vol. 15, no.2, 2002, p.4. My italics.
[13] J. Sellars, 'Nomadic Wisdom: Herodotus and the Scythians', pp. 70,71.
[14] *The Columbia Encyclopedia* (2004), Accessed 2 May 2006, from xreferplus. http://www.xreferplus.com/entry/4290339
[15] 'Adam Ferguson (1723-1816)' in *World of Sociology*, Gale (2001). Accessed 27 July 2006, from xreferplus. http://www.xreferplus.co./entry/4785340

and pejorative senses: scientifically in the studies of past and contemporary nomadic societies, and pejoratively in its usage for any aimless wanderer – the Romany (or gypsies) of Europe, for example, or the "grey nomads", retirees wandering through the country in their motor homes.

With the development of the sciences of archaeology and anthropology in the twentieth century, the study of nomadism became closely associated with prehistoric and contemporary hunter-gatherer societies to the extent of becoming a site of contestation. The prehistories of nomadic societies were recovered from both archaeological and ethnohistorical evidence. Contemporary nomadic societies from the Bakhityari horsemen of the Persian steppes to the remnant terrestrial and maritime hunter-gatherers of the Argentinean Pampas and Patagonia were researched, and a school of comparative anthropology arose. More recent scholarship has been directed at humanistic studies, without totally dismissing the scientific approaches of comparative anthropology. While a comparative study may prove of value in, say, establishing the nature and purpose of the nomadic cultural roads, and overall comparisons may provide evidence on the degrees of adaptation within the various environments of nomadic societies, attempts at constructing typologies may be of little value. For example, attempts were made in the 1970's to establish generative models of nomadism and of hunter-gatherer societies. One proposed – the Sub-Antarctic group – linked the indigenous peoples of Tasmania, the lower South Island of New Zealand, the Chatham Islands and the peoples of Tierra del Fuego.[16] In reading the literature it becomes plain that the differences between these societies were greater than the similarities: some of these peoples were sedentary, some nomadic, and vast differences existed in adaptation to their environments. It would be difficult to establish a generative model from that particular group, a criticism widely levelled at its proponent. The question of change is very important, especially on the issue of how culture is adapted to environment. It touches upon anthropological theories in vogue before *Man the Hunter*, and in some quarters, still extant. In particular, it affects the classification of societies by a so-called "failure to evolve", a theory redolent of Darwinist determinism; a theory canvassed in chapter two above in relation to the Tasmanian Aborigines. A further issue of vital importance is the

[16] D. G. Sutton, 'Towards the Recognition of Convergent Cultural Adaptation in the Subantarctic Zone', *Current Anthropology*, vol. 23, no. 1, February 1982, pp. 77-97.

difference between cultural adaptation and acculturation, the former defining the continuity of a culture, the latter sometimes speeding its demise.

Changes for the better, changes for the worse: cultural adaptation, acculturation and colonialism

Cultural change has been a topic of debate between anthropologists over the many years. An approach to the question, used in the middle years of the twentieth century, was to draw parallels between cultural change and biological processes, resulting in evolutionary definitions such as that proposed by Alexander Alland – that '*Evolutionary adaptation'* is transgenerational change in the direction of increased maximization in specific environments.'[17] The equating of biological and social processes produced such terms as 'cultural evolution', 'cultural adaptation', and 'cultural ecology', all directed at perceived major changes within societies.[18] A further concept, again biologically-based, was that of 'cultural drift', where the analogy was drawn with genetic drift – random change unaffected by external factors. Koerper and Stickel, in proposing this concept, distinguished it from three other forms of cultural change, all being analogues of biological processes. They were, first, invention or discovery, a parallel to mutation in biology; secondly, selection (or cultural adaptation), a parallel to Darwinian natural selection; and finally, diffusion, a parallel to gene flow.[19] The theories of cultural adaptation by any definition were questioned by Thomas Bargatzy, who claimed that the concept of adaptation had application only to the biological sciences, and that by the use of biological analogies 'an individual human characteristic such as "rationality" is transformed into the rationality of ecosystemic selection.'[20]

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[17] A. Alland Jr., 'Adaptation', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol. 4. 1975, p. 59.
[18] Alland; M. J. O'Brien & T. D. Holland, 'The Role of Adaptation in Archaeological Explanation', *American Antiquity*, vol. 57, no. 1, Jan. 1992, pp. 36-59; E. A. Smith, 'Risk and uncertainty in the 'original affluent society: evolution ecology of resource sharing and land tenure', *Hunters and Gathererers Vol.1: History, Evolution and Social Change*, T. Ingold, D. Riches & J. Woodburn (eds), Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1988, pp. 222-251.
[19] H. C. Koerper & E. G. Stickel, 'Cultural drift: a primary process of cultural change', *Journal of Anthropological Research*, vol. 36, no. 4, winter, 1980, p. 463.
[20] T. Bargatzky et al., ' Culture, Environment, and the Ills of Adaptationism [and Comments and Reply]', *Current Anthropoly*, vol. 25, no. 4, Aug.- Oct. 1984, pp. 400, 402.

While the above arguments are apposite to anthropological method, a straight-forward approach appropriate to historical record was adopted by Harry Lourandos. He noted that 'social relations are influenced by other variables [like] environment and demography [but such relations] have their own internal dynamic ... because it is here decisions are made'. Lourandos' objective was therefore 'to demonstrate how social relations can themselves establish a context for change and generate ... further changes.'[21] This simpler view of cultural change was shared by Timothy Earle in claiming that 'the individual [is the] active decision maker and manipulator, choosing among alternatives in his broad natural and cultural environment'; and by Walter Goldschmidt in noting that 'individual men and women choose to follow courses of action that ecology makes feasible'.[22] For the purposes of this thesis, cultural adaptation will be treated as major changes in culture by aboriginal peoples over millennia in response to perceived ecological change or advantage. Maladaptations which resulted in directional societal change will also be discussed.

As already noted in chapters one and two above, the Tasmanian Aborigines made many changes in culture in response to the environment they faced. From the first migrations across the Bassian Plain, ecology directed cultural change, resulting in mass movements to less testing environments and in forms of habitation – simple temporary shelters as opposed to permanent, well-constructed dwellings – reflecting the natural surroundings of the migrants. Ecology was a persuasive factor in determining band size and hunting and gathering practices, including the development of the simplified toolkit. Other adaptations previously discussed in Chapter two included the construction of appropriate sea craft for the relatively short voyages to the off-shore islands, and the well-controlled use of fire in bringing about vegetation change in order to increase productive land for hunting purposes. Perhaps the most significant adaptation was the adoption by some of the Tasmanians of a completely nomadic life, where the roads travelled became cultural landscapes, holding significant spiritual as well as economic and other cultural values. On the other hand, the abandonment of scaled fish as part of the Tasmanians' diet was considered by some anthropologists as a maladaptation, although, as noted in Chapter one, if

[21] H. Lourandos, 'Paleopolitics; resource intensification in Aboriginal Australia and Papua New Guinea', *Hunters and Gatherers Vol. 1,* p.150.
[22] T. Earle & W. Goldschmidt in Bargatzky et. al., pp. 406, 407.

considered in terms of a taboo or ritual prohibition, or as an unnecessary resource in the presence of plentiful alternatives; it may well have been a positive adaptive response.

A second and separate form of cultural change was that brought about by acculturation – changes in customs, beliefs and artefacts resulting from contact between societies with different cultures. Such changes are effected by incorporation in whole or in part of another society's culture, where the advantage of a cultural practice is perceived by the society adopting it. The process of incorporation is voluntary and may be undertaken with or without the encouragement of the originating society. A Tasmanian example, discussed above, was the adoption of domesticated dogs by the Aborigines, used for hunting and companionship in the same manner as their use by the British colonizers. Van Diemen's Land had no indigenous animal of the genus *Canis*, the dingo having arrived on the Australian continent after the flooding of the Bassian Plain. The Tasmanians were quick to observe and adopt the dog as both a hunting tool and a companion, stealing the animals from the settlers at every opportunity.[23] Reports of mobs of dogs with Aboriginal bands recur throughout settlers' journals. For example, James Kelly, during his circumnavigation of Van Diemen's Land, reported the presence of 'about two hundred men, women and children, and at least fifty dogs' on the north-east coast near Waterhouse Point, in January 1816.[24] Jorgen Jorgenson considered that the Aborigines 'displayed great natural capacity in the training of dogs, and they treated them more like children than brutes.'[25]

A further example of cultural incorporation was in diet, where the Aborigines quickly developed a fondness for sugar and tea, often stealing the items from the outlying stockkeepers' huts.[26] In 1829, Robinson noted that 'as Woorady has in common with many others expressed his partiality to that grateful beverage tea and

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[23] Knopwood reported the loss of two valuable dogs on 24 September 1805. On 5 October 2006, Knopwood blamed 'the prisoners in the bush' for taking 'many of the gentlemen's dogs', and on 6 December reported that 'Fosset' [or 'Fawcett'], a bushranger, had stolen a dog. In August, he reported numerous dogs stolen by the bushrangers. Knopwood, *The Diaries* pp. 91, 116, 121, 140, 141. It is likely that many of these dogs or their offspring passed into the hands of the Aborigines.
[24] J. E. Calder (ed), *The Circumnavigations of Van Diemen's Land,* p.29.
[25] Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land,* p. 52.
[26] Burn, *A Picture of Van Diemen's Land,* pp. 23, 24, for one example.

sugar ... I have no doubt that any aborigine once tasting it would willingly forego a substantial meal for the sake of it.'[27] Other foods sought included bread, meat and potatoes. Knopwood, in 1815, had repeated visits from women and children seeking these foods.[28] On the other hand, a significant rejection of white culture by the Aborigines was the use of firearms. While blankets and guns were regularly stolen from settlers, there were no confirmed reports of the use of firearms either for hunting or for fighting, other than their use as a threat in an attempted robbery, mentioned below.[29] Calder claimed 'of [firearms] it was found that they knew not only the use, but were practised in using them: but there is no instance of their bringing them into the field', preferring their own weapons.[30] The theft of guns may well have represented a defensive action, and they were sometimes surrendered to the settlers at a later date – Robinson recovered eight guns from a hiding-place near Lake Echo in November 1831. Four of these weapons had been taken at Port Sorell by the killers of Thomas and Parker, then concealed and kept in good condition. Robinson records Umarrah as claiming that he 'once cooeed a white man and asked him for bread and pointed a gun at him, and the man was so frightened that he run away.'[31]

Another form of acculturation is *directed or coerced change*, where one culture establishes dominance over another by force or by other forms of political control, and imposes its own cultural forms upon the dominated. The classical examples of this form of acculturation stem from imperialism, where colonizers took lands by conquest, cession or theft, and imposed Western cultural forms upon the indigenous peoples. The late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were a period of British colonial expansion unparalleled in history. This period coincided with the apogee of the Enlightenment –

> the basic tenet that the world could be improved and human beings made better as the result of conscious human planning and disciplined endeavour.[32]

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[27] Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* p. 77.
[28] Knopwood, *The Diaries,* pp. 217, 232, 293, 294.
[29] Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson.*, p.78; Burn, *A picture of Van Diemen's Land,* pp. 23, 24.
[30] Calder, *Some Account of the Wars , Extirpation, Habits &c.*, p. 10.
[31] Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* pp. 510, 511.
[32] J. Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment and the origins of European Australia,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p.7. References in this para. & on pp. 92-96, and generally on the tension between colonialism and humanitarianism from G. K. Calder, *Robbers and Redeemers: dispossession and humanitarianism in Van Diemen's Land,* unpublished Honours thesis, University of Tasmania, 2005.

It was an age where the understanding of society and its cultural forms were sought in the sciences, and scientific method and reason took predominance over religion and mysticism. The key precept of the Enlightenment was that the application of reason leads to perpetual progress – and therefore to the endless advance of Western civilization. This precept was exemplified by Jeremy Bentham in his boast that

> I have formed a plan of universal conquest. I intend to govern all the nations in the habitable globe after my death – With what weapons? With rhetoric? With fine speeches? With prohibitive and irritant clauses? – No: but with reasons, with a chain of ... articulate and connected reasons, all depending on one principle.[33]

In order to rule the world, it had first to be discovered, hence the scientific explorations noted above; and once discovered, the former *terra incognita* was to be exploited.

The period also coincided with another great movement – the Evangelical Revival – exemplified in Great Britain by the Methodist movement, together with evangelicalism within the Church of England It was first championed by John Wesley, and later promoted and supported by the Clapham Sect, which had prominent supporters in parliamentarians William Wilberforce and Henry Thornton. One aim of the evangelicals was to bring Christianity to unbelievers by means of missions to heathens and savages in the "discovered" lands. These missions entailed the propagation of the Gospel, philanthropy and education; in Wilberforce's words, 'moderating the insolence of power [and rendering] the inequalities of the social state less galling to the lower orders, whom [Christianity] also instructs'[34] While a prime aim of many evangelicals was the abolition of slavery, the "civilizing" influence of Christianity was promoted through such bodies as the London Missionary Society, formed in 1797, the Church Missionary Society, in 1799, and the British and Foreign Bible Society, in 1803. The ideology of the evangelicals was aptly expressed by the Reverend Baptist Noel, when he claimed

> [the Empire] has been given, not to flatter English vanity, nor to gratify English cupidity; but that Englishmen may be, in the hands of God, the heralds of civilization, to the remotest corners of the earth.[35]

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[33] Bentham quoted in Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia*, p. 6.
[34] Wilberforce quoted in A. Armstrong, *The Church of England, the Methodists and Society 1700-1850*, London: University of London Press, 1973, p. 135.
[35] Quoted in J. Bollen, 'English Christianity and the Australian Colonies', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol. 28 (1), October 1977, p. 385.

The fusion of these two apparently antithetical movements – one aimed at saving souls and civilizing the saved, the other at dispossessing the indigenes of their lands – formed the discourse of Empire within which the secular and the religious pursued a common aim: colonial expansion. The role of government in achieving this objective was threefold: firstly, to move the indigenous peoples off their lands; secondly, to protect its subjects who voluntarily chose to settle in the discovered lands; and thirdly, to provide the necessary infrastructure in the form of labour (often by transporting convicts, or by encouraging emigration) for the mercantile exploitation of the lands, and by carrying out the exploration, surveying, mapping, naming and disposition of the lands to the settlers. In short, to introduce the ideology of private property as embodied in the English common law into the new colonies, providing inviolable rights to the new owners while denying any rights to the old, and, by creating 'a new human geography ... superimposed [on the lands of the former inhabitants], it defined where they could and could not go'.[36] In the case of hunter-gatherer societies, dependent upon free-ranging over their country, private property, with its associated enclosure by roads, homesteads and fencing, effectively drove them out, usually onto "waste" lands not wanted by the dispossessors. There they could be civilized by the humanitarian efforts of the colonizers, through the application of religion, science and other forms of education, including the teaching of English and the proscription of indigenous languages.

The tension between colonialism and humanitarianism was patent. On the one hand, the colonial objective was to dispossess the owners of discovered lands, either by force of arms or by unequal treaties, or even by the means of a social construction of "discovery" – a principle that 'everything seen was at once owned', and where the indigenous people were invisible.[37] This principle, later to form the basis of the doctrine of *terra nullius*, had its origins in natural law, a foundation stone of which was that the first taker became the rightful owner. The indigenes occupying the lands were not deemed to "own" it, because, under the ideology of property they had failed to "improve" the land. It was 'a piece of waste land writ large requiring to be brought

[36] Harris, 'How did colonialism dispossess?' p. 178.
[37] S. Ryan, *The Cartographic Eye: How Explorers Saw Australia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, p. 23.

into productive use.'[38] The words of an early settler in New South Wales, righteously supporting the denial of rights to Aborigines, clearly spell out this philosophy: 'That they have never tilled the soil, or enclosed it, or cleared any portion of it, or planted a single tree, or grain, or root, is acknowledged.'[39] Waste lands were there for the taking.

On the other hand, the principles of both the Enlightenment and the Evangelical revival expressed humanitarian concern for the well-being of the dispossessed, a concern where secular and religious thought came together. As Peter Hulme noted, John Locke subscribed to 'the monogenetic tradition of Christian thought guaranteeing the essential unity of the human species, even to the uttermost part of the earth'.[40] That is to say, all men are equal and independent, and 'no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions.'[41] Christianity also emphasised monogenism – the common origin of man. The extension of Locke's philosophy was found in the eighteenth century works of Lord Shaftesbury. He held that, contrary to 'the egoistic philosophy of Hobbes ... Man is naturally a virtuous being, and is endowed with a moral sense which distinguishes good from evil.'[42] Through Shaftesbury's works, deist humanitarianism developed throughout England, and not to be outdone, the Established Church also began to stress humanitarianism as 'a product of true Christianity.'[43]

The tension between colonialism and humanitarianism was to be reflected in every colonial enterprise as the British Empire extended itself, with colonial administrators enjoined to promote the mercantile value of the new possessions, often in the face of violent opposition from the dispossessed, and at the same time to endeavour to follow strictures to respect the rights and well-being of the same people, while using science and religion to "civilize" them. For example, the royal

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[38] Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia,* p. 70.
[39] Richard Windeyer, quoted in H. Reynolds, *This Whispering in Our Hearts*, St.Leonards: Allen & Unwin, 1998, p. 20.
[40] P. Hulme, 'The spontaneous hand of nature', P. Hulme & L. Jordanova (eds), *The Enlightenment and its Shadows*, London: Routledge, 1990, p.33.
[41] John Locke, 'An Essay Concerning the True Original, Extent and End of Civil Government', E. Barker (ed), *Social Contract: Essays by Locke Hume Rousseau*, London, Oxford University Press, 1971, p. 5.
[42] Shaftesbury quoted in F. Klinberg, *The Anti-Slavery Movement in England*, Yale Historical Publications, Miscellany XVII, 1968, p. 26.
[43] p. 28.

commission of the first governor of New South Wales, Captain Arthur Phillip, directed him to 'endeavour by every possible means to open an intercourse with the natives, and to conciliate their affections, enjoining all our subjects to live in amity and kindness with them.'[44] Similar instructions given to George Arthur when he was appointed Lieutenant Governor of Van Diemen's Land in 1824 placed that well-intentioned man in an impossible position. A committed evangelical, Arthur was faced with violent confrontations between settlers and Aborigines, and in attempting to be all things to all men, presided over the destruction of once-vibrant Aboriginal societies, as the following chapters relate. The British public were not unaware of the effects of colonialism upon indigenous peoples. Alan Atkinson exemplified the influences of the Evangelical Revival on the proposed establishment of the Botany Bay colony in quoting a contemporary voice commenting on the proposal, published as correspondence to the London *Morning Chronicle* in 1786:

> Mr. Editor, The transportation of felons to Botany Bay, seems the most extraordinary of all the extraordinary measures adopted by the present immaculate administration ... the natives because they are justly jealous of such invasion, must be destroyed by the armed force which is sent out with the convicts, to support the occupancy of lands not their own. I should have thought that a slight regard to the common rights of mankind might have prevailed in the breasts of the ministers who consulted upon this plan; and that they would have revolted at the idea of so much human blood being spilled in such unjustifiable acquisitions ... is our glorious system of Revelation to be preached by them? or rather, will not the innocent Pagans be corrupted, and vices, crimes and diseases unknown, be disseminated amongst them? ... if it must proceed, I hope no man, who has a regard to truth, will hereafter talk of the justice and goodness of the heart of the Minister. [45]

On settling at Port Jackson, the tension between colonialism and humanitarianism surfaced among the colony's early administrators. Watkin Tench, Captain of the Marines, claimed Aborigines were 'Children of the same omniscient paternal care' and that 'untaught, unaccommodated man, is the same in Pall Mall, as in the wilderness of New South Wales'; and 'the progress of reason, and the splendor of revelation, will ... transfuse into these desert regions, knowledge, virtue and happiness.' As Gascoigne noted, Tench was fusing Enlightenment thought with Christian beliefs.[46] When Governor Phillip proposed the use of terror by seizing and decapitating Aborigines following the wounding of a gamekeeper, Lieutenant William Dawes of the Marines at first refused to take part, claiming such action was an affront

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[44] *HRA*, series I, vol. I, p. 13.
[45] A. Atkinson, 'The ethics of conquest, 1786', *Aboriginal History*, vol. 6 (1982), pp. 86-91
[46] Gascoigne, *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia*, pp.25, 148.

to his beliefs. Tench, however, was quite prepared to carry out Phillip's orders. Dawes resigned his post as engineer and surveyor, and returned to England in 1791 in dismay, in part because of his concern at the manner in which the Indigenous people were treated. He only avoided a court-martial by virtue of his position as an officer in the marines, not subject to military discipline. Dawes became a confidant of the evangelical Reverend John Newton, and a supporter of William Wilberforce in the campaign to abolish the slave trade.[47]

Examples of forced or coerced acculturation abound within the colonies of the British Empire, with similar examples occurring in the other Anglophone Empire, the United States of America. The effects of imperialism on two native cultures are discussed below. In the Australian context, two prime examples of the use of force or coercion were firstly, the removal of Aboriginal children from their families; and secondly, the use of religion in attempts to "civilize" Aborigines. The removal of Aboriginal children from their families in Australia began almost immediately after the First Fleet took up occupation at Port Jackson. George Mackaness noted that attempts to "civilize" Aboriginal children were made early in the occupation of the settlement, '... influenced by the [then] current philanthropic concept of "rescuing" pauper children and training them to be a pliable labour force.'[48] Jan Kociumbas pointed to the "adoption" of Aboriginal children by the Reverend Samuel Marsden, by Surgeon John White, by George Caley and by the Reverend Richard Johnson. All these supposedly philanthropic ventures amounted to little or nothing, or ended tragically – the adopted were either returned to their people, died, or in one notorious case, hanged.[49]

In Van Diemen's Land, Aboriginal children were removed from their families from the time of first settlement. Knopwood reported the capture of a 'fine native boy' following the notorious clash between the Aborigines and the marines at Risdon Cove on 3 May 1804. The boy was kept by the colonial surgeon Jacob Mountgarret, and christened by Knopwood a week later. He was given the name 'Robert Hobert

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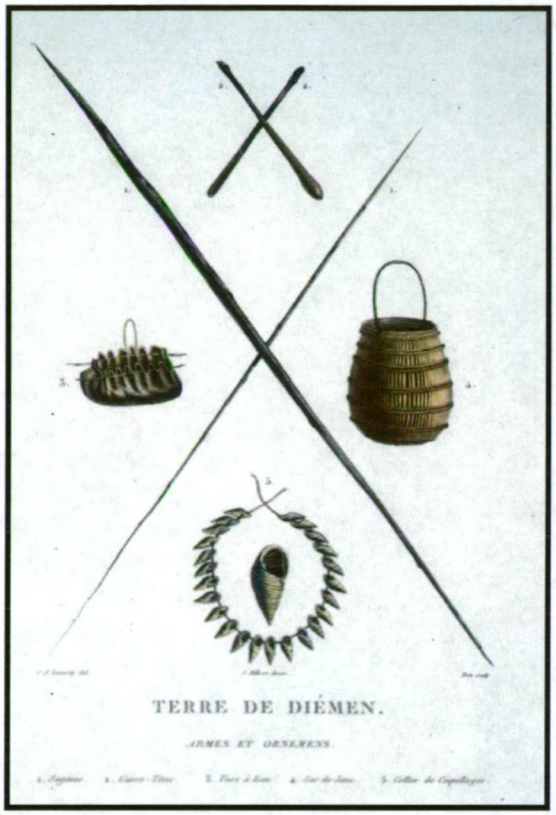
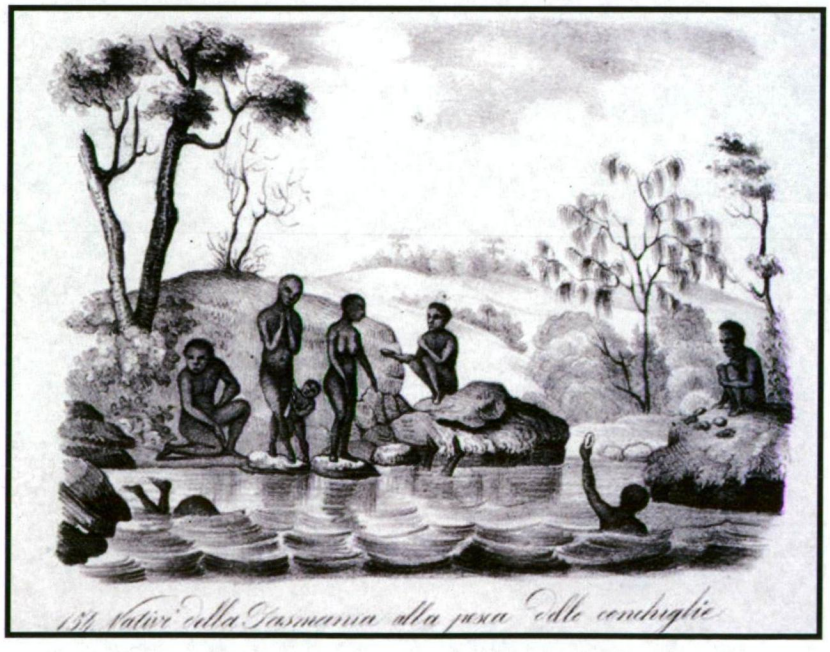
[47] G. Mackaness, *Admiral Arthur Phillip. Founder of New South Wales 1738-1814*, Halstead Press, Sydney, 1937, pp.297, 298, 357,358.
[48] J. Kociumbas, *Possessions*: *The Oxford History of Australia,* vol.2, 1770-1860, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1992, p. 54.
[49] pp.54, 55.



'Terre de Diemen, armes et ornamens'
Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, 1807
State Library of Tasmania: Tasmaniana Library
The sketch provides an example of the so-called 'simplified' toolkit of the Tasmanians

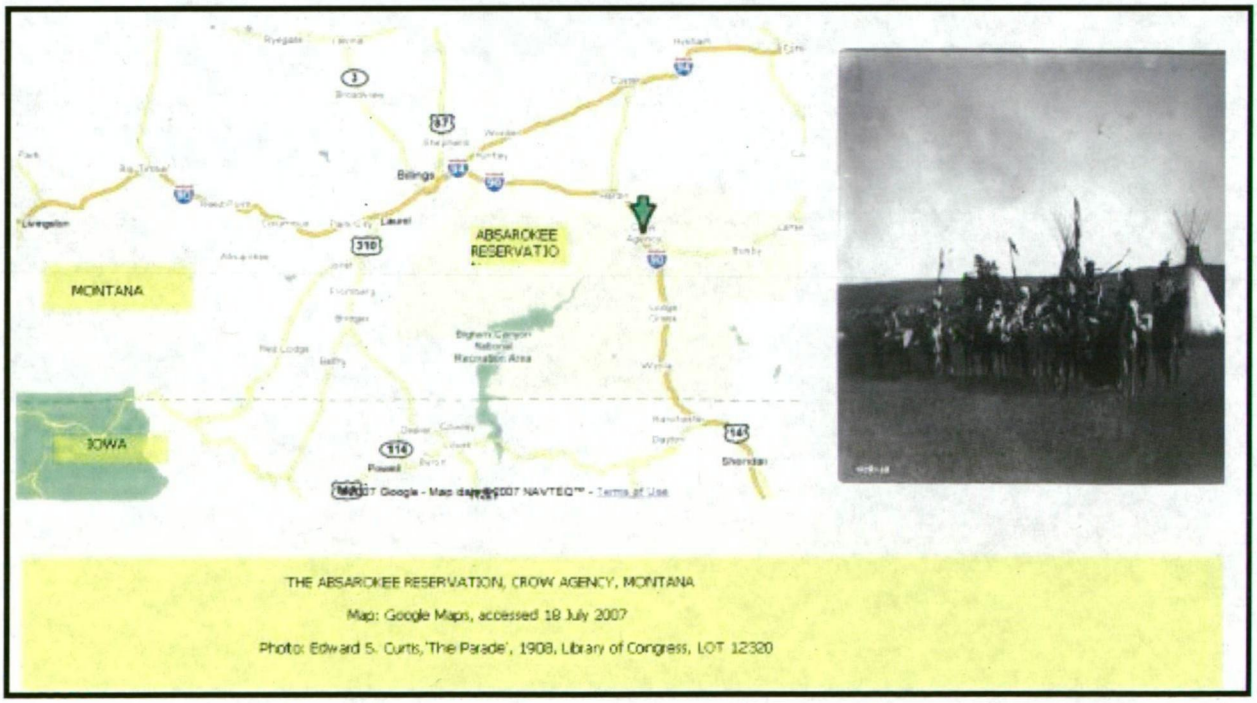
'Terre de Diemen, habitations'
Charles-Alexandre Lesueur, 1807
Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office, State Library of Tasmania

'Aborigines of Tasmania'
Bishop Francis Russell Nixon, ca. 1850s
State Library of Tasmania
Taken at Oyster Cove Aboriginal Settlement, showing dogs. The dogs appear to be wolfhound hunting breeds.

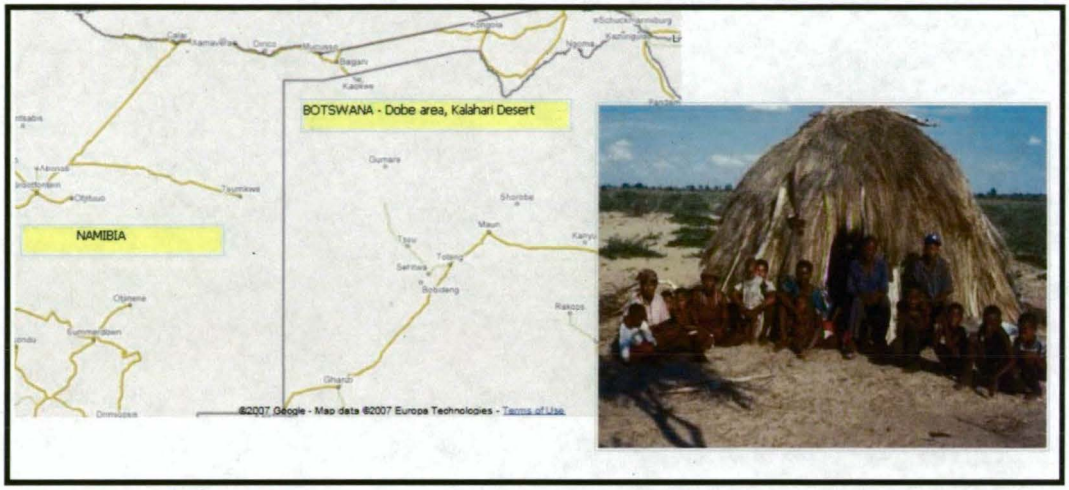


'Nativi della Tasmania alla pesca delle conchiglie'
(Tasmanian Aborigines catching shellfish)
Artist unknown. An Italian copy of an etching by Piron, 1807
State Library of Tasmania

'Chief Plenty Coups, Crow Indian'
Edward S. Curtis, ca. 1908
Library of Congress, Washington, LOT12320



'Apsaroke Indians on horseback in front of two teepees'
Edward S. Curtis, ca. 1908
Library of Congress, Washington, LOT 12320



'First People of the Kalahari' – Barsawa and hut
Society for Threatened Peoples, Göttingen, GD. www.gbfv.it

"Bushmen near Hammerstein'
http://www.diebergers.at/KHB%20Bildergalerie%20Namibia%20People.htm

[sic] May', but, on the orders of Lieutenant-Governor Collins, was returned to his people.[50] Another example was that of Kickerterpoller of the *Paredarererme* band at Little Swanport. Taken as a child, he was brought up by the Birch family in the Midlands, and given the name 'Tom Birch'.[51] As a youth, he joined Gilbert Robertson's roving party and participated in the capture of Umarrah. He died at Emu Bay in May 1832, having at times been on the conciliatory missions with George Augustus Robinson, who described him as 'a faithful servant [who] had laboured hard in the service of the aboriginal mission ... Tom had been baptised.'[52] This example also demonstrates the fusion of Enlightenment and evangelical thought. The benefits of being raised in a white household were not obvious to all the stolen children. The party sent to capture the notorious Sydney Aborigine Musquito (Yerrangoulaga), then leading a marauding band on the east coast of Van Diemen's Land, included an Aboriginal boy named 'Teague' or 'Tegg', 'reared from a child in the family of Dr. Luttrell'.[53] Tegg played a prominent and brave role in the capture, and was promised 'a whale boat and several other rewards for his service; but poor Teague never got his boat – the disappointment affected him most seriously, and he fretted himself to death in consequence. He died at Mr Hobbs's stock hut.'[54]

The civilizing role of the evangelicals was just as unsuccessful. The first colonial chaplains who had accompanied the early settlers to New South Wales – the Reverends Richard Johnson and Samuel Marsden – took little interest in missionary activities among the Aborigines, Marsden declaring that 'the Aboriginal people were so low down on the human scale that they were incapable of learning the time-discipline, the individualistic competitiveness and respect for private property which was part of the missionary creed.'[55] The first substantial humanitarian effort was made by the Reverend William Shelley, who, in 1814, established a 'native institution' – a special school for Aboriginal children separated from their families by

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[50] Knopwood, *The Diaries,* p. 51. The irony in the given Christian names is obvious.
[51] Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* p.109, n. 69.
[52] Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* p. 608.
[53] Melville, *The History of the Island of Van Diemen's Land,* pp. 31-34; Calder, *Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits &c.,* pp. 51-53. Calder claimed 'Tegg' was raised by the newspaper proprietor, Andrew Bent. There is no record of Tegg's real name. Musquito was hanged for the murders of William Hollyoak and Mammoa. His companion Black Jack was acquitted, but later charged, tried, convicted and hanged for the murder of Patrick McCarthy.
[54] Melville, p.31. Lieutenant-Governor Arthur apparently made the promise.
[55] Kociumbas,. *Possessions,* p.146.

the Hawkesbury wars, most forcibly removed into the school. The endeavour failed, even with the support of Governor Macquarie, closing in 1824, and never having achieved any significant improvement in the lot of its inmates, who, in any event, evinced little interest in changing their way of life.[56] The established missionary societies had even less success. The early efforts of the London Missionary Society were at first directed at the islands in the South Pacific, the first mission to New South Wales, supported by the Society, being established by the Reverend Lancelot Threlkeld at Lake Macquarie in 1824. His mission began enthusiastically, with reasonable numbers enrolled, but by 1828 the costs of maintaining the mission, even in the light of the results claimed by Threlkeld, led to the withdrawal of the Society from the work. Threlkeld continued with the support of the colonial government, claiming in 1838 that 'The Aborigines have so far advanced in the scale of civilization, as to choose employments most congenial to their own habits and tastes, in order to supply their scanty wants.'[57] Whether or not these claims were true, Threlkeld made one useful contribution in gaining an understanding of and recording the languages of those Aborigines coming within his care. By 1841 however, the dwindling numbers at the mission resulted in the withdrawal of government support and the mission closed. The London Missionary Society did not re-enter the missionary field in Australia.[58] Later attempts by the Church Missionary Society and the Wesleyan Missionary Society were equally unsuccessful.[59] The failure of the early evangelical missions came as little surprise; as Gascoigne noted 'Christianity, particularly in its dominant Evangelical form with its emphasis on individual salvation, had little attraction for Aboriginal cultures which focused on the group and its survival.'[60] The inability to understand and acknowledge Aboriginal culture and social norms, ignorance of Aboriginal languages, and particularly the failure to recognise the relationship of the Indigenous people with the land not only led to the failure of the early missions but also would have tragic consequences in later missionary efforts.

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[56] Kociumbas, p.146.
[57] Gascoigne, *The Enlightenemnt and the Origins of European Australia,* . p.158, quoting Threlkeld.
[58] Bollen, 'English Christianity and the Australian colonies', p.271. A previous attempt at missionary work was made by the Wesleyan Missionary Society, by appointing its Australian representative, William Walker, missionary to the Aborigines in conjunction with his chaplaincy to the convicts and settlers. No mission was established as a result (p.269).
[59] Bollen, pp. 273-279.
[60] Gascoigne,. p.156.

Apart from the christening of stolen children discussed above, no attempts were made by any administration to minister religion to the Aborigines in a systematic manner until the arrival of Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur in 1824. In his first colonial appointment as Superintendent of the British settlement of Belize in Central America, Arthur demonstrated

> an almost incredible energy, strong imperial sentiments, a passion for 'approbation' of his work from his superiors, a desire for the financial rewards which he was convinced he needed for the sake of his family, a strong dislike of opposition, particularly if it seemed tinged with any radical political ideas ... and an undoubted humanitarianism based on a deeply felt devotion to his Calvinist brand of Christianity.[61]

These characteristics at times resulted in conflict with the settlers; however, Arthur continued to retain the support of the Government, as indicated by his appointment as viceroy of Van Diemen's Land. His humanitarianism, arising both from his evangelical beliefs and his association with William Wilberforce's anti-slavery movement, became evident in the Belize settlement when, soon after his arrival, he (unsuccessfully) attempted to prevent the landing of fourteen slaves from Jamaica. He also demonstrated a concern for the indigenous population, referring to 'the over-ruling necessity of doing Justice to the injured and degraded Indians.'[62] His evangelicalism inclined him to turn Van Diemen's Land into one large mission, where every official and settler had the duty to bring civilization to the dispossessed inhabitants – a religious duty which included the inculcation of the true meaning of land ownership and property: that is, its productive use in individual ownership. [63] Arthur's first attempt at the use of religion as a civilizing tool took place soon after his arrival, when he asked two ministers – the Reverends William Bedford and Ralph Mansfield – to prepare a 'code' for a 'native institution' to be funded partly by the government and partly by 'private benevolence'. A public meeting was called to further the venture, but roused little interest given the state of the colony's finances, the concern over the depredations of the bushrangers, and the conviction that the Aborigines could not be civilized in any event. The project was 'confined to the ...

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[61] A.G.L. Shaw (a), *Sir George Arthur, Bart.1784-1854,* Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1980, p.60.

[62] p.54.

[63] Richard Ely notes that 'Like most Clapham "saints" [Arthur] was thoroughly erastian ... maintaining that *he* was pastor-in-chief as well as commander-in-chief of the colony.' Ely, 'Pains and Penalties: The Religio-Moral Economy of Penal Transportation to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, *Revisioning Australian Colonial Christianity: New Essays in the Australian Christian Experience 1788-1900*, M. Hutchinson & E. Campion (eds), Centre for the Study of Australian Christianity, Sydney, 1994, p.82.

rising generation. Mr Mansfield [had] rested his expectation rather on the power of God than upon human probabilities.'[64] In December 1829, Arthur formed '... a standing committee for regulating the care and treatment of the captured aborigines, and for suggesting such measures of conciliation as shall appear ... calculated to bring about a permanent friendly intercourse between the native tribes and the colonists.'[65] The committee later assumed an overall advisory role to the governor on Aboriginal affairs, and supervised Robinson's conciliatory missions. Shaw believed that this committee 'had little new to say and seemed more concerned with whitewashing the Government and protecting the settlers than with looking after the natives.'[66]

The final act of forced acculturation in Van Diemen's Land came with Robinson's missions and the exile of all the remnant Aboriginal bands to Flinders Island. Apart from the manner in which the exiles were compelled to live at the Wybalenna settlement on the island, including the "proper" housing – British-style cottages constructed using convict labour – their diet was dictated by their white supervisors, and customary practices such as hunting and fishing often denied them. In particular, their nomadic instincts were 'circumscribed by the prohibition on going on excursions as they pleased'.[67] Children were taken to the Orphan School at Hobart, continuing the Port Jackson practice of removing children from their families. Foremost of all was the role assigned to religious education. A catechist was appointed from the beginning, and these appointments continued for the life of the settlement. Arthur's view on the role of religion was spelled out with no uncertainty in a reprimand given to the settlement commandant Henry Nickolls in 1835, when Nickolls attempted to provide the Aborigines with a practical education in farming. The Colonial Secretary noted that, in Arthur's opinion,

> [in] truth, the inculcation of the first principles of the religion, not of nature, as it is called, but of the Bible, is the most effectual mode of introducing civilization; His Excellency conceives it, therefore, to be of the very greatest importance that every practicable facility should be

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[64] West, *The History of Tasmania,* p. 269.
[65] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, pp. 98, 100. The members of the committee were: Archdeacon W.G. Broughton (chairman), Reverends William Bedford and James Norman, P.A. Mulgrave (Chief Police Magistrate), Jocelyn Thomas (Colonial Treasurer), James Scott (Colonial Surgeon), Samuel Hill (Port Officer) and Charles Arthur (secretary).
[66] Shaw, note 30, p.626, in West, *The History of Tasmania.*
[67] N. J. B. Plomley (ed), *Weep in Silence: a history of the Flinders Island Aboriginal Settlement, with the Flinders Island Journal of George Augustus Robinson 1835-1839*, Hobart: Blubber Head Press, 1987, p. 73.

> given to the Catechist in the performance of his most important duties, of which *preaching* constitutes but a trifling part.[68]

The proscription of almost all Aboriginal culture, together with sickness and a malaise resulting from their strict confinement had the tragic consequences for the Tasmanians as discussed in following chapters. In short, forced acculturation was a complete and utter failure, deserving at least the charge of misrepresentation. Calder, criticising Arthur's actions, claimed that:

> [in] thus giving up their wild liberty, [the Aborigines] were seduced by the fair and captivating promises [Robinson] made them, firstly of an address with the Governor, who ... would redress all their wrongs ... and secondly, of future support and governmental protection against outrage. It was an awful day ... when they trusted the good faith of the Government ...[69]

Alexander Maconochie, another strident critic of Arthur, noted:

> [had Arthur] adequately protected, and sought to *influence*, as well as *controul* [sic] the Aborigines, the mutual injuries between them and the settlers would not have been inflicted, which persuaded him at length, that it was his duty to exterminate, or deport them. Had he adequately respected human nature also, in their persons, and properly appreciated their inherent rights, he would never, as I think, have been reconciled even by any circumstances, to such an extreme course. And when they were at his feet, brought there not by his own agency, but by the extraordinary courage, talent and influence over them, of an obscure individual, had he properly appreciated that moral victory, or been adequately warned and instructed by the example set by it, he would never have cast its victims, first on one, then on another desolate island in Bass's Straits, where the privations to which they have been subjected, and the other treatment they have received (though partly well meant), have now reduced them to a mere handful.[70]

The Tasmanians were one example of the failure of the imperialists to respect the rights of indigenous peoples. Two other examples of the failure of the fusion of colonialism and humanitarianism follow.

Nomadism in other societies: cultural choices in North America and Southern Africa

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[68] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 941 n.29.

[69] Calder, *Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits, &c.*, p.62

[70] A.Maconochie, *On Colonel Arthur's General Character and Government*, facsimile ed., Sullivan's Cove, Hobart, 1989, pp.12, 13. The word 'genocide' – a word coined by the Polish-born jurist Raphael Lemkin in 1944 to describe the actions of the Nazis against the Jews – has also been used to describe the actions of the British colonizers against the Tasmanians. As an unknown term in the nineteenth century, it is not used in this thesis. The contemporary word used freely by the settlers for the actions taken against the Aborigines to encompass dispossession, exclusion, murder, stealing women and children, the wars, and finally the exile of the remnant peoples was 'extirpation'; a pejorative word with the literal meaning of "rooting out" of all things considered bad or evil, such as weeds, unwanted animal species, heresies and bodily malignancies. Its association with the removal of the Aborigines is of equal malevolence as that of genocide – and the intent is the same.

The anthropological concept of 'generative models' of hunter-gatherer societies was mentioned above in reference to a proposed 'sub-Antarctic group of peoples'. The value of generative models, or even direct comparisons between peoples because of perceived similarities, is questionable. In the vast majority of cases, hunter-gatherer societies are distinguished more by their individuality than similarity. The inherent dangers in drawing similarities or commonalities between hunter-gather peoples was emphasised by Susan Kent, when she pointed out the cultural diversities among the peoples of the Kalahari, even among peoples of the same socio-linguistic groups. She noted that overgeneralizing, particularistic analogy and a misunderstanding of the nature of comparative studies can act to mask diversity, whereas the study of foragers 'in a cross-cultural, as well as prehistoric, context [should] take into account the diversity present in mobility patterns, sociopolitical organization, and so on.'[71] A similar view was taken by Sibel Kusimba, when he noted that 'a research agenda driven by identifying hunter-gathers either in general or with ethnographically known groups misses the goal of understanding ancient ways of life in and of themselves and sets up a circularity of interpretation where the nature of the society is assumed from the start.'[72] As discussed above, the diversity of culture among the hunter-gatherers of Tasmania ranged from the semi-sedentary peoples of the west coast to the nomads of the east, including completely different languages. In this section of the study of nomadism, one purpose of making comparisons is to highlight diversity and point out the differences that led to cultural development and adaptation in each respective society. The second purpose is to emphasise the argument central to this thesis: that nomadism was a cultural choice of some societies, not a first step along a spectrum of societal development leading to "civilization". As noted in chapter one, the concept of the nomadic hunter-gatherer as the uncivilized savage on the lowest rung of the societal ladder is a Eurocentric concept not supported by studies of prehistoric or modern hunter-gathers. To this end, it is proposed to briefly examine two very diverse groups of hunter-gatherers, specifically to demonstrate those differences and to support the notion of choice of a nomadic existence as a trait central to the culture of each society.

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[71] S. Kent, 'The Current Forager Controversy: Real versus Ideal Views of Hunter-Gatherers', *Man*, New Series, vol. 27, no. 1 (March 1992), p. 61.

[72] S. B. Kusimba, 'What is a Hunter-Gatherer? Variation in the Archaeological Record of Eastern and Southern Africa', *Journal of Archaeological Research*, vol. 13, no. 4, Decembar 2005, p. 354.

The two societies are, firstly, the Absarokee (Crow) People of the Northern Plains of the United States of America; and secondly, the !Kung (Basarwa) People of the northern Kalahari Desert of southern Africa, within the states of Botswana and Namibia. The brief histories of these two nomadic peoples are not intended to be comprehensive, or to draw similarities with hunting and gathering nomads of Tasmania. The intention is to demonstrate firstly, the positive choice of adopting a nomadic culture in preference to another societal form; and secondly, the diverse effects of cultural adaptation, cultural incorporation, and forced acculturation as the result of colonial dispossession, and the manner in which the respective nomadic peoples coped with change. Eventually dispossessed, forcibly acculturated and persecuted, the !Kung and the Absarokee joined the long line of indigenous peoples who have suffered under imperial and post-colonial ambition. Their experiences ranged from the relatively recent dispossession of the !Kung, who were essentially left to their own resources and way of life until valuable minerals were discovered in their lands; and the Absarokee, who attempted to cooperate with their colonial masters believing they would be able to sustain their society. By learning the lessons of politicking from their new masters, the Absarokee managed to retain a modicum of their nomadic culture. In contrast, the colonial experience of the Van Diemen's Land Aborigines was at the other end of the scale – confrontational and violent, with tragic consequences.

The choice of the !Kung and the Absarokee for comparative study is the result of factors which starkly demonstrate choice and diversity. In the first instance, both were (and are) relatively small societies within larger socio-linguistic groups of indigenous peoples. Secondly, both maintained identity, culture and language during internecine wars, subjugation, colonial dispossession and post-colonial reorganization. Thirdly, both demonstrate the cultural choice of nomadism within an environment of sedentary cultures. Finally, the diversity in their cultures emphasises the point that generative modelling has little value in the study of hunter-gatherer peoples. The discussion of these two nomadic societies is confined to the four points noted. A more detailed history of the Absarokee and !Kung is contained in Appendix. 1.

The Absarokee, also known as the Crow, are Peoples of the Plains of the American north-west, the lands between the Missouri and the Yellowstone Rivers, to

the east of the Rocky Mountains. The Plains lay on a semi-arid plateau in a rain shadow, with prolific grasslands but low afforestation. Herds of grazing animals such as bison, elk, deer and antelope populated the plateau, providing the economic basis of the nomadic societies of the Plains, in food quest, trade, clothing and housing (in the form of the skin covering of tipis). The bison in particular, as the prime animal of the hunt, formed a central part of Absarokee culture beyond the economic, playing a spiritual role as detailed in the Appendix. The nomadic lifestyle of the Absarokee was fundamental to their culture. Their origins lay in the sedentary Siouan-speakers whose permanent villages were situated along the Missouri River, and whose economy was based on agriculture. The decision to separate from the Hidatsa Peoples and maintain a nomadic culture was a cultural choice. The arrival of the horse on the Plains in late eighteenth century gave great impetus to the nomadic lifestyle of the Absarokee, expediting movement and transport of food and trade goods. As with the bison, the horse played a spiritual as well as an economic role in the culture, the Absarokee attributing supernatural powers to it. The second vital cultural adaptation came with the firearm, first acquired from French and British traders in the mid-seventeenth century. The firearm enabled the killing of vast numbers of game animals, and expedited the trade in furs, a trade which became the staple of the Absarokee economy. The population of the People was, in common with most nomadic hunter-gatherer societies, relatively small, probably never exceeding 5,000. The first official census of the Absarokee, taken in 1884 when the People had been subjected to confinement on their reservation, disclosed a population of 2,682, separated into twenty-seven bands, making an average band size about one hundred.[73] These people occupied a vast territory, a measure being the land first granted as a reservation under a treaty made in 1851: over thirty-eight million acres were set aside, an area largely encompassing the tribal lands.[74]

Surrounded by largely sedentary Sioux peoples, and under increasing pressure from white miners and settlers, the Absarokee nonetheless managed to maintain their nomadic existence within their reservation, engaging in fur trading with white trappers and in ritual wars with their sedentary neighbours. However, by the

[73] F. E. Hoxie, *Parading Through History: The Making of the Crow Nation in America 1805-1935*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 130-132. One estimate of the Absarokee population prior to the white invasions of the Plains was 16,000, substantially reduced by smallpox epidemics to around 3,500 by 1880. No other estimate places the population figure as high.

[74] Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and the U.S.: Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee*, Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2004, p.37, 38.

1860s, the pressures for land for white settlers had reduced their reservation to eight million acres, the results of renegotiated treaties and the willingness of some of the bands to sell or lease their lands. Promised indemnities for cession of lands by way of health, welfare and education facilities, together with housing and livestock (to convert the nomads into farmers), generally failed to materialise. Indian agents appointed by the Federal government and responsible for the care and welfare of the Absarokee encouraged the sales, to the detriment of the Peoples' nomadic culture. Similar pressures arose from the activities of Roman Catholic and Unitarian missionaries who established schools and attempted to stamp out the spiritual beliefs of the People, and their nomadic lifestyle.[75] However, the Absarokee managed to continue many cultural practices, including the activities of the warrior bands in raids on neighbours, and particularly in their spiritual life and nomadic treks on a regular basis. A famous leader – Chief Plenty Coups, 'the last great chief of the Crow nation' – fought valiantly against the increasing Federal directives forbidding traditional practices, including the outlawing of the Sun Dance, polygyny, trading in horses, and the spiritual role of the medicine man, all attempts at "civilizing" the Absarokee, but all vital blows to a once-vibrant culture.[76] By 1905, their reservation had been reduced to less than three million acres, much as it remains today – an area less than ten percent of their original country. The effect on the prestige and morale of the Absarokee had been devastating. It was summed up in the *cri de cœur* of Chief Plenty Coups in 1880, telling a journalist that 'when the buffalo went away the hearts of my people fell to the ground, and they could not lift them up again. After this nothing happened.'[77]

The !Kung People remain a small socio-linguist group of nomadic hunter-gathers in a location in sub-Saharan Africa archaeologists believe to be the home of modern human beginnings.[78] Their country in the Kalahari Desert spans the borders of Botswana and Namibia, and is surrounded by herders and other agricultural peoples of ancient lineage who interacted with the nomadic !Kung over centuries in

[75] Hoxie, *Parading Through History,* pp. 200-205.
[76] pp. 216-218.
[77] J. Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006,
[78] R. E. Donahue, M.L. Murphy & L. H. Robbins, 'Lithic Microwear analysis of Middle Stone Age artefacts from White Paintings rock shelter, Botswana', *Journal of Field Archaeology,* vol. 29, nos. ½, (Spring-Summer) 2004, pp. 156, 157.

relative harmony.[79] The Desert is an elevated basin formed in the Tertiary era, covered with a mantle of sand, and with dry rivers carrying water only after exceptional rains. The river beds provide a source of underground water tapped by wells drilled into the substrata. The climate is extreme: hot summers exceeding 38°C, a rainy season with rainfall to 600mm, and moderate winters with mean temperatures of 25°C. The !Kung hunted over one hundred species of animals inhabiting the region, including large mammals such as the giraffe, kudu, eland and wildebeest, and smaller animals such as warthogs and springhares. Game included guinea fowl and bustards, and some reptiles were also taken for food. In addition, over one hundred and fifty plant species were foraged, including thirty species of roots and bulbs, thirty species of fruits and berries and 'an assortment of melons, nuts, leafy greens and edible gums'.[80] The !Kung therefore enjoyed a varied and abundant food source which supported their nomadic existence.

The !Kung population was also small, perhaps as low as 2,500, divided into bands of about twenty-four persons, the result of the environment of the country they occupied – the Dobe area of the Northern Kalahari Desert – and the food and water resources available to them. The bands were organised by kin – although conjugal relationships were exogamous – with each band communally owning land surrounding a convenient waterhole. The bands lived and acted communally without a 'headman'.[81] The peoples to the east and south of their country had large populations, the total numbers of Barsawa-speakers estimated at 45-55,000 in 1955.[82] However, while the languages of the different peoples had the same roots – a 'click language' unique to this part of southern Africa – they were not mutually intelligible to each other.[83] The bands of !Kung, able to interact through language, were thus isolated from their neighbours.

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[79] The origins and continued existence of the !Kung is a contested debate – see Kusimba, 'What is a hunter-gatherer?', pp. 340-348; Kent, 'The current forager controversy', pp. 61, 62. There is evidence of some enslavement of the !Kung by the herders.

[80] The description of the Kalahari Desert and its biota is from R. B. Lee & I. DeVore (eds), *Kalahari Hunter-Gatherers: Studies of the !Kung San and Their Neighbours*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976. pp. 28-42

[81] pp. 77-94, 268, 269; A. Barnard, 'Kinship, language and production: a conjectural history of Khoisan social structure', *Journal of the International African Institute*, vol. 58, no. 1 (1988), pp. 29, 30.

[82] pp. 6, 85-94, 153.

[83] Kent, 'The current forager controversy', p. 50 – note the similarity with language differences in Tasmania. For the use of language as an indicator of the manner in which Kalaharan societies formed, see *Appendix 1*.

The hunting toolkit of the !Kung consisted of bows and poisoned arrows and hunting spears, together with hafted stone blades and axes in prehistoric times, later with iron weapons obtained by trade, an adaptation mirrored in many hunter-gatherer societies, including the Absarokee. Habitations consisted of huts constructed of boughs and leaves, circular in shape, and about two metres in diameter, providing basic shelter in the rainy season. In the dry season, huts were 'no more than a few leafy branches stuck in the ground to provide shade.'[84]

The cosmology of the !Kung was elaborate, revolving around a creation myth as detailed in Appendix 1. Ochre featured powerfully in ceremonial and social life, and other ornamentation included shell beads and necklaces. Music, through the use of a stringed instrument, and dancing were well-developed, and served in religious as well as recreation practices, but there was an absence of 'plastic or pictorial arts.'[85] The above brief description indicates a comprehensive and full cultural existence in a relatively closed society, even in the near-presence of other societies which, judged by European standards, would have been considered to be higher on the scale of civilization.

The !Kung managed to maintain their nomadic culture through the ages, even though the European imperialists were involved in the "Scramble for Africa", especially from the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Dutch and the British began the colonization of southern Africa. Although missionaries had penetrated the inner parts of Namibia and the Bechuanaland Protectorate (Botswana) in the 1840s, the isolated !Kung, living in their hostile environment, were left to themselves.[86] In 1867, the British declared Bechuanaland a Crown protectorate, and in 1884, the Germans declared the territory of South West Africa (Namibia) a protectorate, entering into an agreement with the British on spheres of influence in southern Africa. Therefore, without their knowledge or consent, the !Kung had become subjects of either Great Britain or Imperial Germany. An increasing number

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[84] Lee & Devore, *Kalahari Hunters and Gatherers,* pp. 63, 64.
[85] pp. 364-366.
[86] The "Scramble for Africa", particularly southern Africa, is detailed in J. H. Wellington, *South West Africa and its Human Issues,* London: Oxford University Press, 1967, pp. 158-200; missionary activities in T. Jeal, *Livingstone*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985, pp. 39, 80.

of explorers, white traders, missionaries and other adventurers passed through the Dobe area of the Kalahari without any significant contact with the !Kung, the unappealing nature of the country leaving them free from interference, apart from their interaction with their Bantu-speaking farming neighbours.

The situation changed dramatically in the twentieth century. In 1910, the Union of South Africa was created, and after the Great War the League of Nations mandated the territory of Namibia to the Union. The Protectorate of Bechuanaland was granted independence in 1966, becoming the state of Botswana. In the mandated territory, the !Kung were affected by two policies of the government of the Union: first, the missionary activities of the Dutch Reformed Church, which attempted forms of forced acculturation by way of religion and education, proscribing traditional cultural practices; and secondly, by the partial militarisation of the !Kung, conscripting many men into ethnic battalions to fight the SWAPO movement in adjoining Angola.[87] These forms of forced acculturation had an obvious and lasting effect on the !Kung economy and society, not the least the removal of the hunters from their societal role as joint resource providers, as well as the gradual erosion of traditional culture by missionary activities.

In the new Republic of Botswana, the !Kung, left to the own devices until the 1990s, were suddenly the victims of a government decision to remove them from their traditional country, which was now within the Central Kgalagadi Game Reserve. The reasons for removal and relocation were stated to be the cost of maintaining basic and essential services such as provision of water, food rations, health care and access to education. The !Kung attempted to negotiate with the government, but in 2001 they were advised the government proposed to curtail all services within the Reserve, and compensation was offered to those who chose to relocate. The cause of the !Kung was taken up by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and then the United Nations' Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the latter body recommending that the government of Botswana:

> pay particular attention to the close cultural ties that bind the San/Barsawa [including the !Kung] to their ancestral land ... protect [their] economic activities that are an essential element of their culture, such as hunting and gathering practices, whether conducted by

[87] R. B. Lee & M. Guenther, 'Problems in Kalahari historical ethnography and the tolerance of error', *History in Africa*, vol. 20 (1993), p. 92, 93.

> traditional or modern means ... study all possible alternatives to relocation ... seek the prior free and informed consent of the persons and groups concerned.[88]

The real reason for removal was asserted to be the existence of diamonds within the Game Reserve, and this prompted the Botswana government to declare the area as 'inalienable national property contributing to the central state income', but at the same time denying that the presence of diamonds was the reason for relocation. In 2002, the Barsawa Peoples took the government to the Botswana High Court, seeking a declaration that the termination of essential services to the bands within the Game Reserve was unlawful and unconstitutional, and that they were in lawful possession of their lands and were wrongly deprived of them by force. In a decision handed down in 2006, the Barsawa lost the case.[89] With that conclusion, the !Kung people of the Dobe area joined their compatriots in Namibia as the victims of colonialism (or post-colonialism), through legal process and forced acculturation.

As noted above, the account of the history and ultimate fate of the Absarokee and !Kung nomadic hunter-gatherers was not intended to be comprehensive.[90] The intention was to highlight the differing effects of cultural adaptation, cultural incorporation and forced acculturation as the result of colonial dispossession, and the manner in which the respective peoples coped with change. In the case of the Absarokee, Hoxie pointed to the four periods in their social history. The first was a period without any European contact, where a nomadic culture was born and developed, and a comprehensive and fulfilling culture evolved. The second period was that of 'non-coercive interactions' with Europeans, where trade in mutually desired goods took place. The third period was marked by the coercive activities of Europeans which 'established military, economic and cultural control over the Indians'. The final period was one marked by 'cultural persistence', a time where assimilation into settler society was resisted without violence or war, where the proscription of traditional culture was partially evaded, and where, through diplomacy, Absarokee society not only continued to survive, but flourished as a self-governing entity within the parameters dictated by the United States government.

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[88] *Report of the 68th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination*, 20 February- 10 March 2006, 'Botswana'.
[89] *Sesana & ors v. Attorney-General* (52/2002) [2006] BWHC 1. Botswana High Court, Lobatse, 1 December 2006.
[90] A comprehensive account of these societies is found in Appendix 1.

While that entity is no longer the nomadic hunting and gathering society of prehistory, the Absarokee have 'defined themselves as people with a country and a distinctive way of life.'[91]

The !Kung, on the other hand, left largely alone as a nomadic hunter-gather society during the early colonial period, (primarily because the country they possessed was not desirable in the eyes of the imperialists), became the victims of acculturation and post-colonial avarice. Their society was incapable of adaptation in the form their masters forced upon them, and their future in any form was circumspect. Certainly, their culture had been disrupted beyond recall, and a return to the cultural choice of the nomadic hunter-gatherer an unattainable goal. They remained refugees in an alien society. The distinctions between the three societies – Absarokee, !Kung and *Mairremmener* – is stark. The first, who cooperated with their colonial masters, managed to retain a common culture, with language and other societal facets intact. The second were deprived of their cultural life completely, and suffered a form of internal exile. The last suffered the ultimate fate of banishment and societal loss.[92]

Colonialism and humanitarianism: the discourse of Empire

At the beginning of this chapter, the tension between the two great social and political movements of the era of the Second British Empire – colonialism and humanitarianism – was discussed. The three cases of colonial expansion and the resultant dispossession of the lands of the respective indigenous peoples concerned, as discussed in this thesis, demonstrated a salient point: that, in the resolution of that tension, the interests of the settlers and the state prevailed over those of the indigenes. As Cole Harris noted,

> the years of liberal humanitarianism appear as an interlude of relative principle in a long history of British colonial land policy dominated by expediency. Although a measure of altruism was usually somewhere in the air, the underlying intention of almost any Native land policy in a settler colony was the dispossession, with as little expense and trouble as possible, of Native peoples of most of their land.'[93]

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[91] Hoxie, *Parading Through History,* p. 342.

[92] In the case of the *Mâirremmener*, although ten survivors were repatriated to Tasmania in 1847, they were not returned to their country. The revival of Aboriginal society in the latter part of the twentieth century largely took the form of pan-Tasmanianism, the socio-linguistic differences between the original bands being overlooked.

[93] C. Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Reserves and Resistance in British Columbia,* Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2002, p. 14.

The British Colonial Office, throughout the nineteenth century, constantly enjoined colonial administrations to treat the aboriginal peoples – now British subjects – with kindness and humanity. The commissions and instructions to the successive governors of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, from Arthur Phillip onwards, all contained virtually the same direction: 'to open an intercourse with the natives, and to conciliate their affections, enjoining all our subjects to live in amity and kindness with them'.[94] However, where 'the main article of colonial wealth'[95] – land – was concerned, living in kindness and amity gave way to cultural disruption and violence during the acts of dispossession. Even in the case of the Absarokee, where, with the greatest of goodwill, the people entered into formal treaties of cession, their lands were whittled away by the insatiable appetites of the white settlers. Dispossession was often spurred along by the presence of valuable minerals on the lands, such as diamonds in the case of the Basarwa, and gold in the case of the Absarokee. Even the "invisibility" of the respective peoples – the settler attitude that if they were not seen, they were of no account – was not enough to save their traditional societies in the long term. That is the similarity in the comparison of each of the three societies examined. In the end, their nomadic culture was terminally disrupted by colonialism. In the following chapters, the effects of colonial dispossession on *Mairremmener* society will be canvassed in three stages: first, the initial invasion and occupation of Van Diemen's Land; secondly, the period covering the beginnings of the transformation of the island from a penal settlement to an immigrant settler society; and finally, the unequal but inevitably fatal clash between two disparate cultures.

[94] 'Governor Phillip's Second Commission', *Historical Records of Australia*, Series I, vol. I, p.13.
[95] P. R. Eldershaw, 'Introduction', *Journals of the Land Commissioners for Van Diemen's Land 1826-28*, A. McKay (ed), Hobart: University of Tasmania, 1962, p. xiv.

Chapter Four

An incidental acquisition: the colonization of Van Diemen's Land, 1803-1813

...I was informed that some of the French Officers, during their stay here had informed Lt. Col. Patterson and others, that it was the intention of the French, to make a settlement ... on the East side of Van Diemen's Land ... It is my intention as soon as the Porpoise arrives, to despatch her with a small Establishment to the most Eligible place at "Storm Bay Passage"...

Governor Philip Gidley King to Lord Hobart, 17 November 1802[1]

A timely expedient: the British invasion of Van Diemen's Land

In September 1803, a lone man stood on a hill overlooking the mouth of the river known to the *Moomairremener* People as *Rayghepyerrenne*, and which the succession of visitors in their tall ships had already named the "Derwent". He observed another tall ship entering the river, and descending the hill followed its progress upstream, watching it anchor in the little cove where the first *liapota* – the rivulet – flowed into the river. The man may well have been the young warrior Tooyernammelargenner, later an elder and band leader of the *Moomairremener*.[2] Over the years he had observed many of these visitors with their white skins arrive and leave. Some had brought gifts, had been peaceful and friendly, and had left after a short stay. Others had stormed ashore with their weapons, killing, maiming and seizing the young women, whom the band never saw again. Tooyernammelargenner watched the newcomers in order to judge their demeanour so that he could warn the band of their presence. As the white men came ashore in their small boats, he noted the barrels and boxes they carried, and the large amount of tools and weapons; and the men in the red coats with their firearms, the feared noisy killer that had been used against his People in the past. He watched them erect their *gardown* – the strange shelters they used – and the long pole with the coloured cloth at its peak. He would let these strangers know this was *Moomairremener* country, and they should stay within the bounds of their camp, and leave his People alone. He walked into the camp carrying his spear, and accepted the gifts that they offered to him. He attempted to

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[1] *HRA*, series I, vol. III, p. 737.

[2] The Aboriginal names are from Taylor, *A study of the Palawa (Tasmanian Aboriginal) Place Names*, and Plomley, *A Word-list of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Languages*. The record of Tooyernammelargenner is found in Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, p. 829. In this chapter, Aboriginal names for localities and features will be used in preference to English names.

define the limits within which they should confine themselves, and, on leaving the camp raised his spear as an indication they should not follow. He would warn his People that many white men had arrived, and they should stay away from them. The strangers would surely leave soon, as had all those in the past.[3]

The ship was the colonial brig *Lady Nelson*, commanded by Acting Lieutenant G. Curtoys, and carrying part of the establishment of a new British settlement in Van Diemen's Land. Five days later, on 8 September 1803, a second ship, the *Albion*, arrived with the main party under the command of Lieutenant James Bowen, the superintendent of the proposed new settlement. The location chosen –Risdon Cove – was the 'small cove' charted and named by Lieutenant James Hayes as noted in chapter two above. The establishment included a surgeon, Jacob Mountgarrett; a storekeeper; a corporal and eight privates of the New South Wales Corps; two free settlers; twenty-one male and ten female convicts, two children; and sheep and cattle. Provisions for eight months were also landed. Bowen immediately sent a despatch to Governor King advising him of the selection of the site for a settlement at the Cove. He also noted the absence of Aborigines, advising that some not personally seen by him had been found 'on our first arrival, but they appeared very shy and have since retired entirely from us; not apprehending they would be of any use to us I have not made any search after them, thinking myself well off if I never see them again.'[4] The "invisibility" of the Aborigines, mentioned in chapter two above, was evident in this declaration. The site chosen for the settlement was the country of the *Moomairremener* band, and they were soon to visibly announce their presence.

The new settlement was an expedient, the result of a casual remark. As Christopher Bayly has pointed out, imperial conquests were sometimes described as 'unplanned series of accidents', events *sui generis*, and an acquisition was often

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[3] This account of the Aborigine observing and encountering the *Lady Nelson* on its arrival in Risdon Cove is taken from West, *The History of Tasmania,* p. 262, and from the repeated reference in M. Monypenny, 'Going Out and Coming In: Cooperation and Collaboration Between Aborigines and Europeans in Early Tasmania' *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, Vol. 5 (1), 1995, p. 65. Monypenny's footnote 17, p. 73, incorrectly attributes the reference to 'J. Walker'. There is no evidence of the source of West's quote. The extension of the fiction is my own.

[4] *HRA* Series III, vol. I, pp. 197, 198; and second despatch of 27 September 1803, reporting on the nature of the country and submitting the plan of the proposed settlement, pp. 198-200. The amount of stock actually landed is unknown. Apart from the government stock, the officials and settlers brought their own and some were lost during the voyage. Bowen's concluding remark adds some credence to the reference in West of the 'solitary savage', as noted above.

unintended or fortuitous.[5] While Van Diemen's Land was considered a part of the claim of the British Crown over New Holland, no intention of settlement of the island had been evinced. However, on 18 November 1802, Governor King sent a terse note to the commanding officer of the New South Wales Corps, Lieutenant-Colonel William Patterson, noting that he understood

> [Patterson] is in possession of some information respecting the intentions of the French nation settling on Van Diemen's Land, requests the Lieut.-Governor to furnish him with what information he possesses on this head, in order that Governor King may take the necessary steps, which he cannot but lament he had not the opportunity of doing before he closed his despatches, this information having but just reached his ears from the Acting Principal Surgeon.[6]

The note was the result of a casual conversation between British and French officers, the latter being part of the Baudin scientific expedition that had recently explored the coast of Van Diemen's Land and Bass's Straits, and was then resting and revictualling at Port Jackson. Alarmed at the report, King sent a ship after Baudin (who had by then resumed his expedition) with a letter for the Frenchman, advising of the intention, supposedly already known to Baudin, of fixing a place for a British settlement in Van Diemen's Land. King's suspicions of the French, even in view of denials by Baudin, remained with him. This concern is evidenced by his urgent despatch of 23 November 1802 to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Hobart, reporting again on the rumoured intentions of the French and the of proposed interception of Baudin on King Island.[7] Lord Hobart's reply of 14 February 1803, granting permission to form settlements at Port Phillip and on 'King's Island', arrived at Port Jackson on 1 March 1804. Lieutenant-Colonel David Collins, at that time in England on half-pay with the Royal Marines, was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of the proposed Port Phillip settlement, and was despatched immediately to New South Wales in the ship *Ocean.*[8] Governor King had already moved with some haste to establish a settlement in Van

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[5] C. A. Bayly, *Imperial Meridian: The British Empire and the World 1780-1830*, Harlow: Pearson Education, 1989, p. 58.

[6] *Historical Records of New South Wales, Vol. IV – Hunter and King 1800, 1801, 1802,* F. M. Bladen (ed), Sydney: Charles Potter, Government Printer, 1896, p. 1006.

[7] *HRA*, series I, vol. III, pp. 737-740. The events leading to the interception of Baudin, and the proposal to establish a settlement in Bass's Straits and Van Diemen's Land, is found in pp. 151, 490, 509, 697-699

[8] *HRA*, series I, vol. IV, pp. 8-10. The 'Memorandum of a proposed Settlement in Bass's Straights', 'Suggestions for Instructions to Lieutenant-Governor', and the commissions of the Lieutenant-Governor, Lieutenant-Colonel David Collins, the Assistant Chaplain (Rev. RobertKnopwood), the Deputy Judge-Advocate (Benjamin Barbauld, who never took up the post), Assistant Surgeon (William l'Anson), and the mineralogist (A. W. H. Humphrey), in *HRA,* series III, vol. I, pp. 1-6. Collins' previous appointment in New Holland is briefly mentioned under. All the reasons given, except that of forestalling the French, but particularly that of dividing the convicts, could be and were achieved in other parts of New Holland, e.g. the Moreton Bay settlement.

Diemen's Land, despatching Bowen and two ships on 28 and 30 August 1803, and their arrival at Risdon Cove is noted above.[9] The Cove was chosen presumably on the advice of George Bass, who had explored the area during his circumnavigation of Van Diemen's Land with Matthew Flinders in 1801 and 1802.[10] Given the relatively tiny complement and the paucity of support, the intention to establish a permanent presence could be questioned, and Tooyernammelargenner's expectation that the new arrivals would soon depart may have had some validity.

That issue was, however, put beyond doubt with the failure of the Port Phillip settlement. Collins and his settlers had been directed to relocate to Van Diemen's Land, and his party was conveyed by the ships *Lady Nelson* and *Ocean* to the Derwent Estuary, arriving on 30 January and 15 February 1804 respectively. Collins was an experienced colonial administrator, having spent eight years in New South Wales, from the founding of the Port Jackson settlement in 1788. During that time he had made a concerted effort to study the Aborigines and their languages and had empathised with them.[11] On arrival in the Derwent, Collins immediately realised that the Risdon Cove settlement was poorly sited and poorly resourced and chose an alternative site for his settlement on the west side of the estuary where there was a stream of fresh water and an excellent ship anchorage. Once the most recent arrivals were established, Governor King directed Bowen to relinquish his commission, and the charge of both settlements was assumed by Collins. It could be expected that, contrary to the attitude of Bowen towards the Aborigines as noted above, Collins would have demonstrated the same interest he showed towards the Port Jackson Aborigines. While at Frederick Henry Bay prior to landing, shore parties from the *Ocean* encountered Aborigines, almost certainly from the *Moomairremener* band, perhaps including the warrior Tooyernammelargenner. On 13 February, the settlement chaplain, the Reverend Robert Knopwood, reported the sighting of seventeen men, 'well made, entirely naked and some of them had war weapons; they

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[9] The haste was such that Bowen's commission and instructions arrived a month after he landed at Risdon Cove – *HRA*, Series III, vol. I, pp. 201-205.
[10] West, *The History of Tasmania*, pp. 20, 21, 28.
[11] J. Currey, *David Collins: A Colonial Life*, Carlton: The Meigunyah Press, 2000, pp. 8-11; David Collins, *An Account of the English Colony of New South Wales. With Remarks on the Dispositions, Customs, Manners, etc, of the Native Inhabitants of that Country*, Vol. 1 (originally published 1798), Sydney: A.H. & A.W.Reed, 1975.

had a small boy with them about 7 years old and did not appear to flee.'[12] The encounters with *Mairremmener* bands from this time onwards were relatively infrequent, as noted in chapter two above, most initial contacts being with the peoples west of the Derwent Estuary. Currey claimed that 'Collins did his best to minimise contact with the local people on the premise that if they left the other alone they might manage to co-exist in some semblance of harmony.'[13] This may well have been the case, but was in opposition to the actions of Collins during his time at Port Jackson, when he actively sought to gain knowledge of Aboriginal culture and language, and to use those skills in attempts at conciliation.[14] If Collins, in his present role, had now chosen to make the Aborigines invisible, he was taking a new approach which ran counter to his official instructions, and would have been no benefit to him if and when he sought to extend his keen interest in natural history, as demonstrated in his recent book. If he was perhaps taking a different attitude towards the Aborigines from that of his earlier experiences in New South Wales, it may be exemplified in his despatch to Governor King on 15 May 1804. In referring to the clash at Risdon Cove, Collins claimed:

> I well know that these indiscriminating savages will Consider every White Man as their Enemy, and will if they have Opportunity revenge the Death of their Companions upon those who had a share in the Attack, but I shall make a Point, if it ever is in my power, of doing away the Evil Impressions, which by this and a former Affair they may have received of our dispositions towards them.[15]

In these early days of the settlement it was more likely that the Aboriginal bands simply chose to keep away from the new arrivals, given memories of past clashes with the maritime explorers, and, more probably, the results of their interaction with whalers and sealers as noted below.

It may have also been the case that the Aborigines, especially the *Mairremmener* People whose country lay on the east side of the Derwent, came to an acceptance of the new arrivals once it became obvious that they intended to remain, evidenced by their construction of substantial structures and other activities, and with the removal of most of the Risdon Cove settlement. The Derwent River and Estuary

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[12] Knopwood, *Diaries,* p. 43.
[13] Currey, *David Collins,* p.220. Currey offers no evidence of this.
[14] Collins, *An Account of the English Colony of New South Wales*. Several chapters are devoted to Collins' attempts at engaging Aborigines in discussions on culture and language.
[15] Collins to King, *HRA, series III, vol. 1*, p.238.

formed a substantial boundary between the *Mairremmener*-speakers and the peoples of the west side of the river, who were all of a different socio-linguistic group. These latter people had increasing contact with the settlers in the early period of settlement: however, serious clashes between the *Mairremmener* and the settlers did take place. The first reported contact, which did not involve violence, occurred in January 1804, when convict servant Henry Hacking was confronted by Aborigines who attempted to take a kangaroo he had killed.[16] The first violent clash was that between surveyor James Meehan's party and Aborigines, most likely of the *Moomairremener* band, while Meehan was examining the lands in the vicinity of the Jordan River above its confluence with the Derwent at Herdsman's Cove on 5 February 1804. When 'a Considerable Body of Natives' began removing marking sticks he had placed, Meehan fired on them to disperse them, and fired on them again when they surrounded his campsite that evening. The following morning, Meehan and his party were again faced by 'a Large body ... all armed with spears – in a very Menacing attitude'. Meehan apparently did not fire on them on this occasion, as he promptly left the area and they did not follow him.[17]

The significance of this clash is perhaps found in the Aboriginal concept of "country", as opposed to the European construct of "land". While no contemporary observer discussed (or, apart from the few such as George Augustus Robinson and Jorgen Jorgenson, sought to or was able to discuss) with the Tasmanians the nature of their attachment to their country, it is a reasonable assumption that this attachment was a parallel to that of the Aborigines of the Australian mainland, given the commonality of origins. The distinction lay in a European understanding of the spatiality and temporality of land. "Land" was a thing to be measured and documented, then parcelled out to individual owners over time as property, to be utilised and developed, creating a real personal asset of value. Things on the land, especially flora and fauna, were chattels of the owner, to be dealt with according to the owner's wishes. The British concept of property ownership was illustrated by the comment of George Harris in a letter to his mother written from Hobart Town in August 1804. Referring to kangaroo hunting, Harris claimed 'to get the [kangaroos] is

[16] Fels, *Culture contact in the County of Buckinghamshire*, pp. 48, 49.
[17] Tony Dawson, *James Meehan: a most excellent surveyor*, Sydney: Crossing Press, 2004, pp. 28,29; Ling Roth, *The Aborigines of Tasmania*, p. 2, quoting from Meehan's field books.

only a little exercise for my Gamekeeper & Dogs'[18] – the use of the word 'gamekeeper', even in jest, indicating the ownership of the wild animals, much as the ownership of game animals would attach to the landed estates in England. This contrasted with the Aboriginal belief in country as a holistic and timeless entity, a balanced environment where all things tangible and intangible, living and inert, were and had been forever, "beings" forming the whole of the Aboriginal cultural landscape. All things relating to the land – the tangible things such as the flora and fauna, the rivers, rocks and other topographical features; and the intangible things such as the sun, the moon and stars, the rain and clouds, thunder, lightning and particularly fire – were beings, real entities, which together with Aboriginal man formed "country" with mostly amorphous but known boundaries, which, in Van Diemen's Land, were a factor of socio-linguistic groupings.[19] The nomadic hunter-gatherers were essentially conservative in the apolitical sense; their role was one of managing the status quo, while allowing for cultural adaptation as discussed in chapter one above. When other "beings" materialised in country, human or otherwise, providing the same conservatism was maintained, their presence could be accepted. When it ceased to exist, the conservators resisted the changes. This premise is illustrated by the clashes – relatively few in number – that occurred over the next decade, with the one major exception: the unprovoked and murderous clash at Risdon Cove in May 1804, which will be considered separately.

Beings, not chattels: clashes during the hunting periods

The first decade of the Derwent settlements were years of trial and tribulation, primarily through neglect. The failure of the colonial administrators, both in London and Port Jackson, to supply Lieutenant-Governor Collins with sufficient food, adequate medical facilities and convict labour resulted in periods of near-starvation, relieved only by the self-help activity of hunting native animals, particularly kangaroos.[20] Marie Fels noted four distinct periods of hunting kangaroos for the food

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[18] *Ibid.*, p. 65.

[19] For example, Robinson recorded that the 'Oyster Bay' People called the gum trees their 'countrymen, the peppermint the Cape Portland call theirs, and the Swanport claim the honeysuckle.' Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 369. See also Greg Lehman, 'Telling us true', *Whitewash: On Keith Winschuttle's Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, R. Manne (ed), Melbourne: Black Inc. Agenda, 2003, pp. 180-182.

[20] On neglect, for example, as early as August 1804, Collins, in a despatch to Lord Hobart, Secretary of State for the Colonies, advised of the large numbers of people under medical treatment, and the shortage of appropriate medicines, apparently not sent out with the expedition. *HRA*, Series III, Vol. I,

needed to sustain the settlement, from September 1804 to January 1811.[21] The first period of four months to December 1804 was occasioned by a severe outbreak of scurvy among the settlers, and a need to provide an antiscorbutic for the sufferers. At the time it was considered fresh meat would provide a remedy, and Collins authorised the officers of the establishment who owned dogs to hunt the animals, and sell the carcasses to the commissary. Fels estimated that up to seventy-five kangaroos were killed, supplying over 3,000 pounds of fresh meat which apparently had a salutary effect on the scurvy outbreak, Collins reporting that he had 'every reason to believe that this distribution of fresh Animal food among the Sick was attended with beneficial effects.'[22] During this period, no contact with Aborigines was reported, Collins advising Governor King that 'we have not had any intercourse with them which I do not much regret; and not finding any disposition to straggle among my People'.[23] The implication contained in this statement is that the Aborigines took no exception to the killing and removal of the relatively-small numbers of kangaroos and emus, over half of which were taken by Knopwood and his servants.[24]

The second hunting period described by Fels, from July to October 1805, was necessitated by the complete failure to resupply the settlement at Hobart with adequate food, resulting in severely reduced rations and the consequential threat of starvation. Fels noted that over 17,000 pounds of kangaroo meat was received into the store, estimated to be from well over two hundred animals, taken from hunting grounds close to the town at Risdon, Herdsmans Cove and Sandy Bay. Fels pointed out that there is no record of contact with Aborigines during this massive hunt: but that fires, normally a common feature of Aboriginal activity in these early years, were observed only once, leading to a 'suspicion that [the Aborigines] were seldom in the vicinity of the Derwent that winter.'[25] Consequently, even though much of the hunting

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p.257. In a despatch of 17 June 1806 to Viscount Castlereagh, then Secretary of State, Collins, urgently seeking supplies from England, complained that 'nor could I have supposed it possible that I should, after having been three years and upwards from England, have been so totally unnoticed.' *HRA*, Series III, Vol. I, pp.362, 363. See also, Fels, *Culture contact in the county of Buckinghamshire*, p. 53.

[21] Fels, pp. 50-59. The following detail of the hunting periods is substantially from Fels.

[22] Collins to Lord Hobart, *HRA*, Series III, Vol. I, p. 309.

[23] Collins to King, *HRA*, Series III, Vol. I, p. 281.

[24] Fels, *Culture contact*, p. 52; Knopwood, *Diary*, p. 72.

[25] Fels, p. 53. This is an interesting observation when viewed in conjunction with the evidence compiled by Betty Hiatt of the nomadic movements of the east coast Aborigines (Hiatt, *Food quest and the economy of the Tasmanian Aborigines*, pp. 202, 203). Hiatt noted that statements about fixed seasonal movements of Aborigines presented too simple an account, and failed to include movements

was carried out in the country of the *Moomairremener* band, no contact was made and no clashes occurred.

The supplies of fresh meat alleviated the crisis to some degree. However, by April 1806, the situation was again approaching desperation and hunting resumed for a third time over a period of eleven months, until March 1807. Fels noted Knopwood's reports of extensive firing of the country around Hobart by the Aborigines during this time, which encompassed a period of severe drought, inhibiting the growth of fresh vegetables, but also the growth of native grasses, the sustenance of the kangaroo population. The effects of drought forced the hunters to travel further afield for suitable numbers.[26] A number of clashes between hunters and Aborigines occurred, many within the country of the *Moomairremener*. In the first, on 16 June 1806, two months into the hunting period, one convict servant was wounded by spearing at Pitt Water, and two dogs were killed. The Aborigines involved seized three kangaroos that the hunters had killed. On 27 November 1806, a hunting party was confronted by Aborigines at Frederick Henry Bay, and had nine kangaroos taken from them, and their boat (later recovered) stolen. No injuries were inflicted on either side. On 28 February 1807, at two unnamed locations, hunters were driven off and kill removed, and one convict servant was speared, left behind, and presumed killed. Two days later, three of Knopwood's servants were hunting at an unrecorded location, and were confronted by some sixty Aborigines 'throwing stones and shaking their spears at them.' The hunters shot and killed two of their assailants. Knopwood noted that 'the natives endeavour to keep the men and dogs in the vallies [sic] that they may throw stones at them which they do with great force and exactness', a comment that implied previous clashes of that nature. On 19 May 1807, Knopwood reported a fifth clash between hunters and Aborigines. One of his convict servants had joined a party of the 'Govnrs. People ... when a battle ensued and they killd one of the natives. The natives killd one of the dogs. They [the Aborigines] are so hardened they do not mind being shot at.' The incident appears to have taken place in Frederick Henry Bay, the

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relating to 'social obligations'. Chapters one and two above discuss nomadic movements other than those on food quest.

[26] Fels, pp. 55, 56; and chapter one above, on the Aboriginal use of fire and intimate knowledge of seasons and weather patterns.

country of the *Moomairremener* band. The last comment of Knopwood's indicated the determination of the Aborigines to prevent the removal of the kangaroos.[27]

A sixth clash during this period, differing from those related directly to hunting, was also reported by Knopwood in his diary on 14 February 1807. A convict servant of the Commissary Leonard Fosbrook, Robert Waring, was living in hut above the first falls on the Derwent; that is, above the site of the present town of New Norfolk, perhaps twenty miles from Hobart. He was there for the purpose of hunting, and was 'forced from the hut by the natives which came in great number to him.' Taken a distance from the hut he was speared in the side, and when a second attempt to spear him was made, he shot and killed his assailant. Badly wounded, he struggled to the falls where he met a boat which took him to Hobart. He died from the effects of his wound.[28] Fels postulated that this clash 'bears the distinguishing characteristics of a ritual spearing, the settling of a private quarrel between persons who share some kind of reciprocal relationship. It suggests that Robert Waring was in some degree socialised into traditional life.'[29] While that presumption is a possibility, the simplest explanation may have been that the killing of Waring was another warning to the settlers against the removal of "beings" from country.

Although hunting took place over the remainder of 1807, no records of the results have survived, and no clashes between Aborigines and hunters have been recorded. On 9 October 1807, Knopwood noted that he joined his servant Earl at Brown's River, where he found himself among a large party of Aborigines 'between 250 and 300. They were all very friendly and we gave them presents.'[30] Brown's River lay within the country of the *Mouheneenner* band of the south eastern People, a completely different socio-linguistic group to the *Mairremmener* People whose country was on the eastern side of the Derwent River. It was not the first time that friendly contact had been made with the People of the south-east, as Knopwood reported that Lieutenant-Governor Collins, on an expedition to the Huon River on 21 June 1804, had 'seen many of the natives ... there were about 20 families, he stayd all night with them; they were all very friendly.' Other friendly contacts were reported in

[27] Knopwood, *Diary*, pp. 109, 120, 128, 132; Fels, *Culture clash*, p. 56.
[28] Knopwood, p. 126.
[29] Fels, *Culture clash*, pp. 56, 57.
[30] Knopwood, *Diary*, p. 145.

January, March and August 1806.[31] Fels claimed that 'In the light of [the meeting on 9 October] it is impossible to sustain a view of implacable hostility: even after the deaths of the hunting period amiability could prevail.'[32] The problem with this argument is that, by the record, a very different People were involved in the murderous clashes; specifically, the *Moomairremener* band of the *Mairremmener*, and the hunting of kangaroos had primarily taken place within their country.

From a reading of Garrison and General Orders for the period 1810-1812, Fels has uncovered a final hunting period from September 1810 to January 1811. John Murray was commandant of the Hobart settlement following the death of Lieutenant-Governor Collins, and the orders contain details of the issue of kangaroo meat from the commissary stores, but no details of the hunting parties, or of any clashes between Aborigines and hunters.[33] The one mention of Aborigines in the orders concerned bushrangers, Murray noting that they were 'exercising cruelties on "natives and others"', an issue covered below. However, this hunting period returned a large quantity of meat, reflected in the drop in price paid by the commissary to four pence a pound.[34] With no indication where the hunting took place and no records of clashes, it is not possible to comment on the Aboriginal reaction to this period of hunting.

Fels concluded that 'the quarrel was over the taking of what was rightfully [the Aborigines'], their natural food the kangaroo' and that the difference between the mainland and Tasmanian experiences were that, in the case of Van Diemen's Land, competition for food resource preceded competition for land.[35] In opposition to that conclusion, it is contended that, given the huge food resource represented by the kangaroo population even in the worst of drought years, the clashes were inspired by the cultural differences between the invaders and the Aborigines. The latter viewed the wholesale killing and removal of kangaroos (and emus) not as the theft of chattels, a construct they did not understand, but as the improper removal of beings from their country. The new "beings" – the settler/invaders – had not yet become a permanent part of their cosmos. The large-scale hunting was a disruption of culture, just as the

[31] Pp. 54, 99, 104, 112.
[32] Fels, p. 58.
[33] Pp. 58, 59.
[34] Fels, *Culture contact,* p. 58.
[35] P. 67.

later spread of settlement over the nomadic roads effectively ended cultural practices. However, one feature of the hunting periods affecting Aboriginal culture in a positive manner was clearly the observation of the use of dogs in the hunt, a form of cultural adaptation discussed in chapter two above. At some point the Aborigines ceased to kill dogs they encountered, and appropriated them for their own use.[36]

A murderous affair: the affray at Risdon Cove

On 3 May 1804, a large body of Aborigines, men women and children estimated by observers to be three hundred in number, approached the Risdon Cove settlement, then commanded by Lieutenant William Moore in the absence of the superintendent, John Bowen. At some time about 11am, shots were fired at the Aborigines by a detachment of soldiers sent to assist a settler presumed to be in the path of the advancing body. At 2pm, Robert Knopwood, on the opposite shore at Sullivan's Cove, heard the discharge of one of the two carronades located at the Risdon Cove settlement.[37] In his formal report to Lieutenant-Governor Collins on the affray, Moore reported the death of two Aborigines. In a despatch of 15 May to Governor King, Collins reported that three Aborigines were killed in the affair. In a note to Knopwood, the surgeon Jacob Mountgarrett, who was present when the carronade was fired (and reportedly suggested the action), advised that he had charge of a small Aboriginal boy whose father and mother had been killed during the affray. This is the sum of the contemporary reports on an event that has been and remains the subject of debate and contention. Fels claimed that the 'painstaking analysis' of James B. Walker in 1889 remains current in the absence of any new sources of information. Walker's 'analysis' includes the testimony of the only other eyewitness on record: that of Edward White, a convict servant who encountered the body of Aborigines before they approached the settlement. His testimony was given to the Aborigines' Committee during its hearings on 16 March 1830, during the height of the Black War. Other testimony on the event given to the Committee was hearsay.[38] In previous and subsequent commentaries, the numbers of Aborigines killed has been given as eighty,

[36] P. 76, n.85.
[37] Knopwood, *Diary*, p. 51.
[38] Walker, *Early* Tasmania, pp. 50-55; *Copies of all correspondence*, pp. 53, 54. Hearsay testimony was also given by Knopwood (pp. 52, 53), James Kelly, twelve years of age in 1804 (p. 51), Thomas Stocker (p. 53) and Robert Evans (p. 54).

one hundred, two hundred, and 'many' or 'a great number'.[39] The exact number of Aborigines murdered during the affray will never be known. The historiography of the confrontation at Risdon Cove is extensive, and, as mentioned below, it is a mix of contested narratives. For that reason, the varying narratives are summarised in Appendix 2.

The affray, which differed in nature to the clashes of the hunting periods in that it was initiated by the military stationed at the Cove, has come to represent 'a site of contested narratives of possession and dispossession'[40], and as such remains a central – some have argued, the seminal – moment in the history of the relations between the *Mairremmener* People and the settlers; and, indeed, has been 'reframed ... to acknowledge that the settler's battle with the land included the dispossession of the Aborigines', the key issue leading to the Black War.[41] No matter to what use the narratives of the Risdon Cove affray (murders, 'massacre') are currently put, the historical record contains anomalies and discrepancies directly affecting the contemporary history of the *Mairremmener*, which resulted in their exile in 1831. As one example, the inflated numbers killed during the affray relied, in the main, on the effects of the discharge of the carronade at around 2 pm, yet the testimony given by Edward White to the Aborigines' Committee in 1830 clearly gives 11 am as the time of 'commencement of firing' by the soldiers, presumably near the settlers' huts where White was labouring. He makes no mention of the discharge of the carronade, the sound of which was heard in Hobart Town. White's recall of the effects of the volley of musquetry was 'a great many ... slaughtered and wounded; I don't know how many'.[42] Lieutenant Moore reported two aborigines killed; Collins reported three; and Mountgarrett only referred to two – the mother and father of the captured boy. Apart from White, all those reporting had reasons to minimise the nature of the affray, given the specific instructions to colonial administrators to act humanely towards indigenous peoples, and given that Moore had clearly acted peremptorily, perhaps out of panic, and in a distinctively un-military manner. However, unless the carronade had been discharged with live ammunition (whether round or grapeshot) which would

[39] Lyndall Ryan, 'Risdon Cove and the Massacre of 3 May 1804: Their Place in Tasmanian History', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, Vol. 9, 2004, pp. 107-123.
[40] Ryan, p. 123.
[41] p. 109, quoting Ann Curthoys.
[42] *Copies of all correspondence*, p. 53.

have resulted in huge casualties in a close-packed group, the numbers of Aborigines killed and wounded must only have resulted from the first encounter at 11am. Therefore, the carronade must have been fired blanked as a means of frightening the approaching mob.[43] That given, a volley fired by the soldiers at 11am, whether by two men as claimed by Moore, or a greater number, did result in a number of deaths, and perhaps numbers of wounded.

Discrepancies resulting from justifications and lapse of time make a reconstruction of the affray difficult, if not impossible. In any event, the incident was unprovoked and unjustified, but it is questionable if the later enmity between the Aborigines and settlers can be place on its head. There was an apparent immediate reaction to the events as Fels noted, when some days after the affray convicts collecting oysters near the Cove were 'assaulted by a numerous Party of Natives and beat off with Stones and Clubs.' Collins, in reporting this attack, maintained that he well knew 'that these indiscriminating Savages will Consider every White Man as their enemy, and will if they have the Opportunity to revenge the Death of their Companions'. Fels considered that this attack could have been the assertion of proprietorial rights over food rather than revenge for the Risdon Cove incident.[44] In either case (and the 'proprietorial' justification coincides with the "beings" thesis above), the continued presence of what were most likely part of the *Moomairremener* band at the location is an indication of the failure to frighten them off. As Ryan has pointed out, Risdon Cove was a traditional Aboriginal site for toolmaking, as revealed by archaeological investigations carried out in 1985, and as such, was no doubt frequently visited.[45] On the evidence, it would therefore seem that the Risdon Cove affray was not the catalyst for later events, including the Black War: the causes of the clashes were manifold, but essentially revolved around the disruption and ultimate destruction of cultural practices, the underlying cause being the failure of the settlers

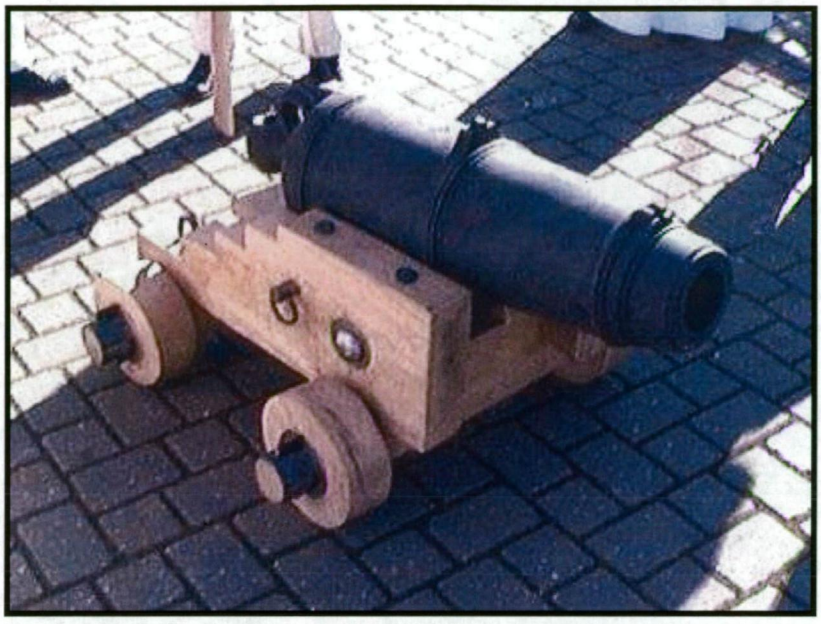
[43] The carronade was a powerful weapon named after its developer, the Carron Iron Company of Falkirk, Scotland in the 1770s. Because it had a short barrel, it was a lighter gun than the long guns carried by major naval units, and could therefore be carried on smaller ships such as schooners and, mounted on a truck carriage, could be readily manhandled onto shore. Loaded with round or grape shot, it was a deadly close range anti-personnel weapon. *The Historical Maritime Society – the Carronade,* www.hms.org.uk/nelsonsnavycarronade.htm, accessed 6 September 2007. The two twelve-pound carronades placed onshore at Risdon Cove came off *HMS Investigator.*

[44] Collins to Governor King, despatch of 15 May 1804, *HRA*, Series III, Vol. I, p. 238; Fels, 'Culture contact', p.49.

[45] Ryan, 'Risdon Cove and the Massacre', p. 118.

'Lieutenant John Bowen and party arriving at Risdon Cove'
Attrib. to Thomas George Gregson, ca. 1860
W. L. Crowther Library, State Library of Tasmania

'Aborigine taking a kangaroo, his Dog having caught it, he runs to kill it with his Waddy'
Sketch by B. Duterreau, 1834-35
State Library of New South Wales



The 'Black Pig" carronade

Carron Iron Company, Falkirk, Scotland

Cannon, similar to those at the Risdon Cove settlement in 1804

The Historical Maritime Society: www.hms.org.uk/nelsonsnavycarronade

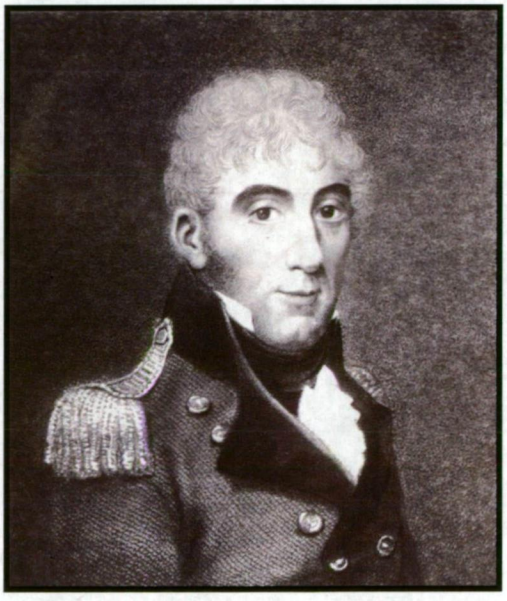
'Old Whaling Station'

Probably bay whaling station on Schouten Island. The fires on the Freycinet Peninsula, to the left facing, are perhaps Aboriginal fires

Artist: S. Prout from *Australia Illustrated* 1874-1876

Hobart: W. L. Crowther Library

'Aborigines of Tasmania'
Bishop Francis Russell Nixon, ca. 1850s
Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts
The group appears in front of a whaleboat, with a blubber boiler left facing, and an oil barrel to the right



Col. David Collins, R.M., Lieut.-Governor
J.W.Beattie, from *The Governors of Tasmania*, 1896
Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts

Captain James Kelly
Photograph of sketch. Artist unknown, nd.
Archives Office of Tasmania: PH30/1/8643

'View from Risdon'
Risdon Cove looking west across the Derwent River, Mount Wellington left facing. The flagpole in the foreground was the site of the Risdon settlement
Attributed to George Evans, Deputy Surveyor-General, Van Diemen's Land, nd.
Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts

to understand the culture of the *Mairremmener*[46]. As Maria Monypenny has pointed out, in these early years it 'may be that Aborigines believed Europeans were being incorporated into the Aboriginal world, on Aboriginal terms, and not vice versa'[47], that is, they were becoming "beings" in the Aboriginal cultural landscape.

Penetrating the interior: explorers and bushrangers

In the early years of the Derwent settlement there was little encouragement of exploration, a concentration on the establishment of a viable town and immediate agricultural hinterland taking priority. The first recorded explorations of the Derwent and Coal River valleys were carried out by the botanist Robert Brown and the government mineralologist Adolarius Humphrey, as noted in chapter two above. Brown and Humphreys did not record any contact with *Mairremmener* bands, but their reports of the fertile country along the rivers no doubt inspired the later settlements in the valleys, particularly the establishment of the Norfolk Island evacuees on the middle reaches of the Derwent. A contemporary series of explorations were probably carried out by Hugh Germain (or German), a marine who was employed from 1805-1810 hunting kangaroos, encountering Aborigines as he travelled into the interior. West noted that 'they offered no violence [and] until the bushrangers excited them by cruelties' Germain considered them harmless. He explored the Jordan and Coal River valleys between 1804 and 1809, the latter location being the route of an Aboriginal nomadic road, and would have undoubtedly encountered *Mairremmener* bands in his journeys.[48]

Lieutenant Thomas Laycock's overland journey between the Port Dalrymple and Hobart Town settlements in 1807 is also noted in chapter two. He passed through much of the country of the inland *Mairremmener* bands, but did not report any sightings of Aborigines. His journey took place in February, and it is likely that many

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[46] Directly apposite to this point is the abject failure of the British to make any concerted attempt to learn the Aboriginal languages in accordance with Degerando's dictum, noted in chapter two above. This is particularly noteworthy in view of Collin's efforts in that regard during his earlier term of office at Port Jackson, and in the sweeping successes of George Augustus Robinson during the conciliatory missions. For criticisms of this failure, see *Hobart Town Courier*, 25 September 1830; Baron Charles von Hügel, *New Holland Journal, November 1833-October 1834*, (trans. & ed. Dympha Clark), Carlton: Miegunyah Press, 1994, p. 144.

[47] Monypenny, 'Going out and coming in', p. 66.

[48] West, *The History of Tasmania*, p. 263; J. L. Davies (ed), *Atlas of Tasmania*, Hobart: Lands & Survey Dept., 1965, p. 38.

of the bands would have been on the lower parts of the Central Plateau during that time and Laycock and his party of four men would at least have been observed at a distance. Similarly, Deputy-Surveyor Charles Grimes surveyed the route of a road between the settlements in August 1807, straightening Laycock's line of road to avoid climbing onto the Central Plateau, and passing through the finest parts of the country of the *Mairremmener* without reporting any sightings of the People.[49]

A third early exploration was that of Surveyor-General John Oxley in 1810. He made an overland journey from Port Dalrymple to the Derwent settlements, again passing through much of the country of the *Mairremmener* bands, but only referred to a direct contact when examining the Port Dalrymple district. Oxley noted that 'A Party of Natives were once pursued; in their endeavours to escape, one of their Women dropped a Bundle, which on examination was found to contain the Bones of a Young Child carefully wrapped in a Kangaroo Skin'. He also observed that 'From the many atrocious cruelties practiced on them by the Convict Bush Rangers, they avoid as much as possible the appearance of a White Man'. While at the Derwent, Oxley claimed that 'there are not less than from 20 to 30 Men from the two Settlements of the Derwent and Port Dalrymple in the Woods ... Some of them have forced the Native Women after murdering their Protectors to live with them and have Families.' Oxley's report extolled the virtues of the fertile Midlands and their potential for agriculture.[50] His report preceded the visit of inspection of Van Diemen's Land by Governor Lachlan Macquarie in 1811. The Governor was equally as enthusiastic on the value of the Midlands for settlement. He 'saw many native fires in the faces of the neighbouring mountains, but saw none of themselves'.[51] Given the season – early summer – the presence of *Mairremmener* bands on the lower Central Plateau would be expected. These explorations and surveys, while having no immediate effect on the *Mairremmener*, were the harbingers of doom for their society, as the following chapters relate.

The government saw a more immediate threat to the welfare of the *Mairremmener* bands from the depredations of escape convicts – the bushrangers –

[49] *HRA* Series III, Vol. I, pp. 669, 671.
[50] *HRA* Series III, Vol. I, pp. 576, 769.
[51] Macquarie, *Journals of his Tours*, pp. 64, 65.

who, from the beginning of the settlement at Hobart Town, absconded sometimes into *Mairremmener* country. For example, Knopwood recorded forty-six escapes from Hobart Town during the period May 1805 to October 1807, with many escapees remaining in the bush for extended periods: John Hunter, James Roberts and Thomas Story surrendered after spending five months away in 1807.[52] There is no record of any crimes committed against the Aborigines by these escapees, and in any event, in the main they went unarmed. Oxley's comment above perhaps reflected the feelings of Lieutenant-Governor Collins on the question when, on 29 January 1810, he issued an order declaring that:

> Any person whomsoever who shall offer violence to a native, or who shall in cool blood murder, or cause any of them to be murdered, shall, on proof being made of the same, be dealt with and proceeded against as if such violence had been offered, or murder committed on, a civilized person.

The order was the result of the disappearance and assumed death of two escaped convicts – William Russell and George Getley (Gelley) – said to have been killed by Aborigines 'in revenge for the murders and abominable cruelties which have been practised upon them.'[53] However, the only confirmed reports of the murder of Aborigines by convict bushrangers during the period to 1811 were those committed by two murderous convict runaways – Richard Lemon and John Brown – who escaped from Port Dalrymple in 1806 and travelled overland to the southern settlement. Brown, on capture, confessed to the torture and killing of at least two male and three female Aborigines and the wounding four other females in an area extending south along Oyster Bay to the outskirts of Hobart Town. Lemon was shot dead during the pursuit by Sergeant Bromley and a party from Port Dalrymple, and Brown was hanged after capture. Some of the Aborigines tortured and killed were *Mairremmener* People from the Oyster Bay area, probably from the *Paredairerme* band. The reaction of Lieutenant-Governor Collins was to threaten prosecution of anyone molesting Aborigines, which suggested to Fels that 'murder and cruelty [towards the Aborigines] were out of the ordinary'.[54]

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[52] Knopwood, *Diary*, p. 120.
[53] James Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians, or, The Black War of Van Diemen's Land*, London: Sampson Low, Son & Marston, 1870 (facs. ed. Libraries Board of South Australia, 1969), p. 40.
[54] Fels, 'Culture contact in the County of Buckinghamshire', pp. 58, 61; also Knopwood, *Diary*, pp.154-156, noting the killing of Lemon by the settler Mansfield.

A further incident is found in the testimony given by James Hobbs to the Aborigines' Committee at a hearing held on 9 March 1830. As well as claiming that 'Lemon and Brown, the bushrangers, committed every species of cruelty upon the Natives', he stated that he 'knew Carrotts, who had been a convict; he told him that he had once cut off a Native man's head at Oyster Bay, and made his wife hang it round her neck, and carry it as a plaything; from Carrotts' manner he credited the story.'[55] 'Carrotts' was the convict James Carrett, who arrived at the Derwent with Collins on the ship *Calcutta* in 1804. He was a recidivist with a record of escapes in 1806 and particularly in August 1807, when he was recorded by Knopwood as being in the bush with a large party of bushrangers, 'all armed and [with] plenty of dogs'.[56] Given a conditional pardon in 1813, he had served as a crew member on Hobbs' circumnavigation of Van Diemen's Land in 1824, and had been a convict servant on survey parties with Thomas Scott, probably on the journey to Lakes Sorell and Crescent in February 1822. As noted in chapter two, in 1823 he was a stock keeper for Dr James Ross on his property on the Shannon River. He was therefore a good bushman, and probably had a considerable amount of contact with *Mairremmener* People from a very early time, both on the east coast and on the Central Plateau. Fels considered the offences attributed to him, if they occurred at all, would have taken place later rather than earlier in his career, which may well have been the case, but his violent disposition was probably manifested on earlier occasions.[57] Hobbs' account has been criticised on the basis that he was an unreliable witness, exaggerating other cases of the murders of Aborigines.[58] Whether true or not, that Carrett was prepared to recount the details of such a gruesome murder is in itself a telling factor of the attitude towards the Aborigines at the time, and not only among the more disreputable classes.

The lack of information on the activities of escaped convicts while in the bush, and the few reports of clashes between Aborigines and bushrangers at this time led Fels to conclude that 'murder and cruelty were out of the ordinary [and] apart from the totally undocumented [year in] 1809, the known murders might have been the only ones'. She postulated that 'Perhaps the bushrangers could not have survived for

[55] *Van Diemen's Land: Copies of All Correspondence,* pp. 49, 50.
[56] Knopwood, *Diary,* pp. 101, 141.
[57] Fels, *Culture Contact,* p. 60.
[58] Windschuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History,* p. 44.

long if they were consistently cruel'.[59] However, there are indications that, from hearsay at the very least, the escaped convicts, even during this early period of settlement, were engaging in violent actions against the Aborigines, including assaulting and abusing women.[60] Lieutenant-Governor Collins would not have issued his general orders relating to the treatment of the Aborigines capriciously, and his threatened penalties for crimes against them would have deterred any returned escapee from admitting to causing harm to any Aborigine. Certainly, 'murder and cruelty' was not out of the ordinary for convicts of the ilk of Lemon, Brown and Carrett.

Vagrants in the interior and on the coast: the stock keepers, sealers and whalers.

The period between 1808 and 1813 also saw movement of settlers into the interior, albeit in relatively small numbers, and still in reasonable proximity to Hobart Town. For example, settlement took place at Pitt Water and along the Coal and Jordan Rivers, areas where many Norfolk Islanders were sent – and although significant grants in these areas were not officially made until 1813, '[James] Meehan argued ... most of the grantees had been on their land since 1808'.[61] This was within the country of the *Moomairremener* band, and the clearing works and hut construction must have come under the notice and concern of the Aborigines, but there were no recorded attacks on the settlers apart from the one instance mentioned below. However, Knopwood's diary for the period July 1808 until January 1814 is missing. During this time, three proclamations were made – firstly by Collins on 10 February 1808 and 29 January 1810, again warning settlers against inflicting violence on 'the natives' and threatening criminal prosecution of offenders. A second proclamation was made by Collins' successor, Lieutenant-Governor Thomas Davey, on 25 June 1813, forbidding violence against the Aborigines and the removal of children. The third proclamation was made following attacks on men and cattle at Collinsvale and Blackmans Bay, where William Russell and George Gelley were killed by the

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[59] Fels, 'Culture contact in the County of Buckinghamshire', pp. 58, 59.
[60] For example, Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, pp. 57-59, quoting the *Derwent Star* of 1810.
[61] Meehan quoted in S. Morgan, *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania: Creating an Antipodean England*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, p. 52. These grants were mainly on the Clarence Plains, at Pitt Water, and in the Coal and Jordan River valleys, as well as the New Norfolk District, pp. 14, 15. The delay in making the grants was caused by the interregnum between the deposition of Governor Bligh and the appointment of a new governor, as approval for grants had to be under the governor's hand. Macquarie's inspection of Van Diemen's Land in November and December 1811 expedited the making of the grants.

Aborigines, and following attacks on stock in the Coal River district, an indication of the extent of settlement in that area by 1813.[62]

The movement of stock into the interior was essentially related to the opening up of those lands to settlers, and therefore began in large numbers after 1813. However, as Fels pointed out, government-owned herds of cattle and sheep were transferred 'to a stockyard located at the junction of the first river and the Derwent' in 1808. The stock was under the control of Edward Lord, with political exile Dennis McCarty as supervisor.[63] The 'first river' was probably the Lachlan River, entering the Derwent from the south, the present location of New Norfolk.[64] During Governor Macquarie's inspection of the area in 1811, he and his party travelled upriver from McCarty's farm (and the Government stockyards) to William Clarke's farm 'beyond the 2d. Fall [on the Derwent River], and about 4½ miles above McCartys'.[65] The Lachlan River was within the country of the *Mouheneenner* People, who had by this time years of contact with the settlers in Hobart Town and along the lower reaches of the Derwent. The Styx River, the probable end location of Macquarie's trip at Clarke's farm, was at the southern extremity of the country of the *Leenowwenne* band of the *Mairremmener*, who had had little if any prior contact with the settlers.[66] McCarty employed several convict servants, although his own grant was only five acres. The servants probably acted as stock keepers, and, in the absence of fencing, would have to check the movement of the cattle and sheep over a wide area of open land.[67] Fels noted it cannot be concluded that these stock keepers maltreated Aborigines, particularly in the form of abduction of women: there are no records.[68] However, by 1812 problems had certainly arisen. In a despatch to Major Geils, then commandant of Van Diemen's Land Settlement pending the appointment of a new

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[62] Plomley, *The Aboriginal/Settler Clash in Van Diemen's Land 1803-1831,* Occasional Paper No. 5, Launceston: Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, nd., pp. 55, 56; Fels, *Culture Contact in the County of Buckinghamshire, op. cit.,* p. 69.

[63] Fels, *Culture Contact in the County of Buckinghamshire,* p. 67.

[64] The location was described by Governor Lachlan Macquarie in the journal of his visit to the district and the 'Government Farm & Stockyard' (in company with Dennis McCarty) on 27 November 1811; *Lachlan Macquarie, Governor of New South Wales: Journals of His Tours,* p. 58.

[65] Macquarie, p. 59. The location of Clarke's farm, according to George Evan's Chart of 1821, was near the confluence of the Styx and Derwent Rivers.

[66] It is possible that *Leenowwenne* were present at Risdon Cove in 1804.

[67] Macquarie noted that the Government Farm 'ran along this fine reach of river for about three quarters of a mile ... between the great river and the rivulet', p. 58. Note the later attack by Aborigines at this location – see under.

[68] Fels, *Culture Contact,* p. 67. Maltreatment certainly took place in 1816.

Lieutenant-Governor, Governor Macquarie authorised the sale of the Government herds at the Derwent yards, given that 'there is much danger and difficulty in maintaining and preserving [them] ... from the Depredations of the Natives and European Bush Rangers, infesting that part of the Country the Cattle graze in'.[69] Stock keepers were always armed, and in protecting stock in later years from Aboriginal attack were quick to fire upon the raiders. It is unlikely that Macquarie would have issued the sale order if the 'Depredations' had been few and far between. Isolated stock keepers' huts made ideal targets for harassing attacks by Aborigines, who were anxious to expel the new "beings" from their country and force them to return to the confined settlements.

Another causal factor of strife between the settlers and the Aborigines was the activities of the sealers and whalers. Whaling in Van Diemen's Land in the early years took two forms. The first was bay whaling, where the hunting was based on land, the whalers using small whale boats within close proximity to the shore. The Derwent Estuary became an established bay whaling area (as did Oyster Bay in later years), with 'great numbers of [Black Whales] in the Shoal parts of the River Derwent' during July, August and September each year.[70] Bay whaling was seasonal, and the second and more productive form was that of whaling from large ships, kept at sea for many months at a time, chasing migrating whales along the Australian and New Zealand coastlines and into the Southern Ocean. These ships reduced the whale blubber to oil on board, and returned to port only to unload and replenish. William Collins' report of 4 August 1804 recommended that the Sullivan's Cove settlement form the base for open sea whaling, with the establishment of 'Store, Boiling or Frying Houses [and] a Factory to receive their Cargoes'.[71] In subsequent years Knopwood noted numerous whaling ships using the new port, beginning with the American whaler *Pilgrim,* captained by Amaso Delano, which arrived in the Derwent on 10 March 1804, soon after the new settlement began.[72] Another whaler, the *Alexander*, arrived in July 1804, having 'been in the South Seas'. It spent time

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[69] *HR A,* Series III, vol. I, p. 479. Despatch to Geils, 1 June 1812.
[70] William Collins, *Account of Prospects of Whaling at the Derwent, HRA,* Series III, Vol. 1, pp. 276-278; Knopwood, *Diary*, p . 84 , 27 May 1805 – 'a great many whales in the river'.
[71] William Collins, p. 277.
[72] Amaso Delano, *A Narrative of a Voyage to New Holland and Van Diemen's Land*, Hobart: Cat & Fiddle Press, 1973 (facs. ed., original n.d., n.p.), n.p. Knopwood, *Diary*, pp. 46, 47. Knopwood dates the arrival of the *Pilgrim* as 10 March 1804.

whaling in the Derwent and Adventure Bay.[73] While whalers and their crews had little or no contact with Aborigines while in port, they often spent time on remote shores in order to gather wood and water. Some took a keener interest. Delano, for example, on sailing from the Derwent, noted the Aborigines setting fires on the shores of Storm Bay. Sending a boat ashore 'commanded by a prudent officer, with instructions how to obtain an interview with them',

> I very soon observed our boat returning with one of the natives, who proved to be their chief; he came on board without any hesitation, as one of our men was left in custody of his tribe during his absence. He shewed no signs of fear whatever, was very much inclined to be sociable, and viewed everything with indifference.

Delano described the man as being of the 'negro cast', about seventy years of age, but 'could not discover any traits of either good sense, activity of mind, ambition, or much animation', a people 'destitute of every necessary of life, that civilized people are accustomed to.' The Aborigine taken on board was probably an elder of the *Moomairremener* band. Delano, (apparently having read James Cook's journals), compared Cook's descriptions of Tasmanians and their culture with his own observations.[74] While Delano demonstrated his interest in the natural sciences (his journal extensively describing the animals, birds and flora of Van Diemen's Land), other whaling crews were comprised of hard-living men recruited from whaling ports such as Boston, the home port of the *Pilgrim*. Interaction between such men and the Aborigines would not likely have been of a scientific nature, and strife between the parties could well have resulted when ships were watering or taking on wood, or for the purposes of seizing indigenes, as demonstrated by the activities of whaling crews in New Zealand. Maoris were taken on board South Sea whalers and brought to Port Jackson. Governor King considered that such abduction occurred with the intention of 'send[ing] some of these credulous people to [the islands in Bass's Straits] where their treatment and return are very suspicious and doubtful.'[75]

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[73] Knopwood, pp. 58, 59, 61. Knopwood makes many references to the arrival of whalers in the port. He was an avid ship-watcher, recording arrivals and departures in his journals.

[74] Delano, *A Narrative of a Voyage*, n.p. Delano reported that his crewman 'hostage', on returning to the ship, described an experience of having his clothes pulled off by the Aborigines 'that they might satisfy themselves as to his sex' - *cf.* the experience of the member of Baudin's crew in Cockle Bay, Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition*, p. 95. Delano may have also read Péron's journal!

[75] Government and General Order, 26 May 1805, issued by Governor Phillip Gidley King, *Historical Records of New Zealand*, vol. I, Wellington: Govt. Printer, 1908, pp. 257, 258.

Records of the sealers in these early years of settlement are few. The activities of sealers operating in Bass Strait out of Port Jackson were noted by Lord Hobart, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, in a despatch to Governor King. He said:

> It seems to be fully ascertained by the vessels that have already passed through those straits that the sea abounds with the seal and the sea elephant, and the attempts that have already been made to fish there have been sufficiently successful to afford encouragement to prosecute that pursuit.[76]

King had already placed on record his concern at the need to protect the seal fishery in Bass Strait, when he advised Collins on the advantages of settling in the Derwent River. King saw

> [the Derwent Estuary as] that place most advantageously situated ... as a place of Resource to our Sealing and Fishing Vessels, And as Colonial vessels may thereafter be despatched from thence to Protect our Fisherys at King's Island and Cape Barren, which are beginning to be encroached on and annoyed by the Americans.[77]

In 1804, soon after the establishment of the settlement at Sullivan's Cove, Knopwood noted sealing ships heading from the new settlement for Bass Strait. Apart from the *Pilgrim*, which was sealing as well as whaling, the *Nancy* sailed for 'King's Island' in May 1804; the *George* for the same destination in December 1804. Later reports included the ships *Governor Hunter, Good Intent, Phoenix, Henrietta, Spring, Sophia, Clarion* (an American ship), and the *Elizabeth and Mary*, a ship owned by Lieutenant Edward Lord, which by 1817 was sealing in Adventure Bay and as far south as Macquarie Island. Knopwood reported that William Collins' 'boat' had brought 2,000 seal skins from Cape Barren Island in January 1807, and 'Mr. Birch's vessell [sic], the *Henrietta*, arrived with 3000 skins from the islands' on 1 April 1815.[78] The well-established presence of sealers at Oyster Bay as early as March 1805, when men from the *Sophia* were attacked by Aborigines and their seal catch and hut burned, was noted above. It is probable that the activities of all the ships working out of the Derwent took seals from any locality where they were plentiful and close to base, and Oyster Bay and the islands offshore were sources of great numbers of seals – the aptly-named Ile des Phoques, off the coast in Oyster Bay, exemplifying that fact.

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[76] *HRA*, Series I, Vol. IV, p. 9, Lord Hobart to Governor King, 14 February 1804.
[77] *H R A*, Series III, Vol. I, p. 40.
[78] Knopwood, *Diary*, pp. 50, 70, 125, 132, 197, 200, 252, 268, 277, 281 & 303. 'Mr. Birch' was the surgeon and trader, Thomas William Birch, the same man who raised the Aborigine Kickerterpoller (Tom Birch) in his own household, as mentioned in chapter two above. The *Spring* brought 6000 skins and 30 tons of salt from 'the Islands' in April 1819. Many of these ships were based at Hobart Town, and owned by local traders.

The attitude of the Aborigines towards the sealers mirrored that of the hunting of kangaroos; that the animals were 'beings' in the same sense, and the hunting by the sealers was an unwarranted encroachment on country.[79] The act of destroying the seal skins in Oyster Bay emphasised that right. It was also highly probable that sealers in such isolated places as Oyster Bay acted in a similar manner to that of the later Bass Strait sealers; that is, the capturing of (or sometimes trading for) women for sexual purposes and use as slave labourers. James Kelly, in his journal of his circumnavigation of Van Diemen's Land in 1815-1816 noted that the Bass Strait sealers 'often [went] to Cape Portland to barter for kangaroo skins with the natives, as also to purchase the young grown-up females to keep them as wives, whom they employed, as they were wonderfully dextrous in hunting kangaroo and catching seals.'[80] The willingness of some Aboriginal bands to trade women for goods in later times will be discussed under, and may well have occurred from the earliest times on the east coast. While the records of women taken by sealers from there relate to periods after 1813, Plomley noted that sealers operated from the Furneaux Islands in Bass Strait perhaps as early as 1805, and there is the above record of sealers active in Oyster Bay the same year.[81] Of the *Mairremmener* women recovered by George Augustus Robinson from the Bass Strait Islands, the oldest appeared to be Tanleboneyer (Sal) of the *Loontemairenner* band of Little Swanport, who may have been born in 1807, but George Robinson recovered fifteen *Mairremmener* women, an indication that the sealers were more than prepared to hunt along the east coast and the adjacent islands when seal numbers were low in Bass Strait, as they were in 1810.[82] The conditions under which the abducted women worked in the sealers' camps, with the often-brutal treatment meted out to them, was not conducive to a long and healthy life, which probably accounts for the absence of older women among those recovered by Robinson. The fact that clashes and abductions were not recorded may simply have indicated that the Aborigines were relatively relaxed at the prospect

[79] A similar attitude is evidenced by James Kelly, when he reported that, after collecting bird eggs on the coast near Cape Grim in January 1815, he was attacked by Aboriginal women who 'came down on a point of rocks and abused us very much for taking their eggs.' Calder, *The Circumnavigations of Van Diemen's Land,* p. 21.
[80] Calder, *The Circumnavigations of Van Diemen's Land,* p. 26.
[81] B. Plomley & K. A. Henley, *The Sealers of Bass Strait and the Cape Barren Island Community,* Hobart: Blubber Head Press, 1990, p. 18. Plomley is specifically referring to the sealer George Briggs.
[82] Robinson, *Weep in Silence,* Appendix 1; Plomley & Henley, p. 17.

of trading with the sealers when it suited them, or more ominously, that any such reports to Van Diemen's Land authorities would lead to recriminations.

The first 'stolen generation': abduction of Aboriginal women and children

Apart from the factors noted above, the other main cause of conflict between settlers and Aborigines was undoubtedly the abduction of women and children. Fels stated that the accepted wisdom was that Europeans captured Aboriginal women for sexual gratification, and children, perhaps for use as labourers or in attempts to 'civilize' them, as mentioned in previous chapters. In examining the evidence of abductions in the early years in the new colony to 1813, Fels noted that 'all histories without exception claim that [capture and sexual exploitation of Aboriginal women] happened, but firm evidence is conspicuous by its absence.'[83] Knopwood's diaries contain no record of the capture of women by the settlers, perhaps not unexpectedly given issues of incrimination and morality. However, he noted several occasions when Aboriginal women and young girls frequented his dwelling seeking food and often staying overnight, or even for longer periods. In November 1815, for example, 'a party of natives came to my house ... two women 3 girls and two boys. I ordered them some bread and meat and gave them potatoes'. The party stayed for two days, camping 'at the bottom of my land and were getting oysters and mussels.'[84] On 15 November 1818, '1 woman, 5 girls and 2 boys ... came for bread etc. ... The 4 girls remaining with us as usual.'[85] It would do an injustice to Knopwood to imply any immoral reasons for these visits; however, they indicate that by this time a degree of acculturation had taken place as the result of which Aborigines were prepared to seek European food from the settlers. It is likely that some settlers, not having the moral scruples of Knopwood, took advantage of the situation.

Fels also noted the relatively few occasions where children were stolen or captured. The first instance, mentioned above in connection with the Risdon Cove incident in 1804, was the capture of the Aboriginal boy 'Robert Hobert May', a likely child of the *Moomairremener* band. Collins had ordered his return to his People, but Fels noted he was still in captivity nineteen months later, possibly with the surgeon

[83] Fels, *Culture Contact,* p. 64
[84] Knopwood, *Diary,* p. 217.
[85] p. 293.

Mountgarrett in Sydney and Port Dalrymple, although no record was found of his later fate. Fels believed Collins must have condoned the capture and retention of the boy, given that knowledge of his presence could not have escaped the Lieutenant-Governor's attention, but the tenor of Collins' original order to return the child was such that it was unlikely Collins approved, tacitly or otherwise.[86] The only other recorded attempt to capture and retain an Aboriginal child during Collins' administration was that of a marine 'Wiggins', who had taken a 'little native girl' brought into Hobart by 'Lt. Johnson servants' from Brown's River on 8 January 1806. The girl promptly 'made her escape out of a window'.[87] As Fels noted, there was a possibility that children were being kept at this time without appearing in the official record, but other settlers such as John Oxley, George Harris and John Fawkner, who recorded the daily life of the settlement, gave not 'the slightest hint that children were being kept', and, in any event, Knopwood, as the chaplain, would have been vitally concerned at the need to baptise any captive, as he did in the case of Robert May.[88] The situation changed with the death of Collins on 24 March 1810. Fels noted that thirty-six baptisms of Aborigines took place to 1820, five under the administration of Captain John Murray, commandant from July 1810 to February 1812. The majority of these baptisms were of children. While there is no direct evidence of abduction, the children were generally given the patrimonial names of their sponsors, who appeared in the main to be military men.[89] As noted in earlier chapters, Aboriginal children were nurtured and cherished, and any abduction would have caused a great deal of angst and anger among the bands who suffered.

Keeping a distance: the **Mairremmener** *in the early years of settlement*

The years from the beginning of the Derwent Estuary settlement to 1813 were years of few contacts and fewer clashes between settlers and the *Mairremmener* People, as exemplified above. From the Aboriginal point of view, the whites had probably established themselves as "beings" in country, part of the Aboriginal cultural landscape, but paying scant attention to the bands of the People bordering on the slowly-expanding settlement. The most favourable attention paid was the occasional

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[86] *Historical Records of Australia*, series III, vol. I, pp. 237-242; despatch, Collins to Governor King, 15 May 1804. Collins 'judged it expedient to direct that the Child be returned to his own People, who might if they never saw it again, imagine we had destroyed it', p. 238.
[87] Knopwood, *Diary*, p. 99.
[88] Fels, *Culture Contact*, p. 65.
[89] p. 65.

proclamation forbidding any interference with them – proclamations generally issued only after harm had already been done. For their own part, and in contrast to the Peoples west of the Derwent Estuary, the *Mairremmener* had kept a respectful distance, resisting only when coming into direct conflict over real or perceived interference with the their cultural landscape, the 'hunting periods' being the prime example. Lieutenant-Governor Collins' behaviour towards the Indigenous peoples was completely at odds with that displayed during his time in New South Wales. The empathy and concern for the welfare of the Aborigines, expressed in *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales*, was totally absent in Van Diemen's Land. The man who claimed that 'friendly intercourse with the natives which had been so earnestly desired was at length established' as the result of observations of the culture, customs and language of the Port Jackson Aborigines was not the same man who established the new colony on the Derwent.[90] If his role as a 'Father to all', a title given to him in an obituary[91], was to lead by example, Collins' failed, his behaviour instilling in his subjects the sense of Aboriginal invisibility, a race of beings only existing on the fringes of society, who could be ignored and dispossessed with impunity. It was an attitude that Collins' successors were happily prepared to adopt.

On Collins' death while in office on 24 March 1810, the command of the Derwent settlement was assumed firstly by Lieutenant Edward Lord, the senior military office of the garrison, then successively by Captain John Murray and Major Andrew Geils as commandants. The interregnum lasted until February 1814, when the new viceroy, Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Davey arrived. During the three and a half years of temporary administration there is no record of clashes between the settlers and Aborigines, and no orders relating to them are extant. It can be assumed that the business of the colony carried on as before, and that unrecorded contacts between the Aborigines, settlers and stock keepers on the fringes of settlement, with the sealers, and perhaps with escaped convicts did occur, but were not recorded for the reasons discussed above. What did take place were the efforts of the senior officers of the administration and the military to make an almost frenzied scramble for land, exemplified in Governor Macquarie approving three hundred and forty-seven grants totalling 33,544 acres in 1813 alone (which also included catch-up grants for

[90] Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales, op. cit.*, p. 451.
[91] Currey, *David Collins*, p. 303, quoting Edward Lord.

applications made in 1811 and 1812).[92] The temporary rulers and administrators of Van Diemen's Land demonstrated themselves to be a venal, self-serving group prepared to continue the process of dispossession without regard to the Aborigines, for their own gain and the benefit of their acquaintances.[93] In doing so, they established a norm for the settlers soon to arrive, to whom the open spaces were 'Waste and unoccupied Lands' in the European construct, the 'main article of colonial wealth'; the very reason for emigrating.[94] The land was to be taken into private ownership, in total ignorance of the importance of those open spaces to Aboriginal culture. The best of these 'waste lands' lay within the country of the *Mairremmener* People. Their cultural landscape was soon to be overwhelmed. Tooyernammelargenner of the *Moomairremener* band, now an important elder and warrior and at the forefront of the white dispossession of *Pyendayme*, the Aboriginal country the settlers called "Pitt Water", likely reflected on that unfortunate day in 1803, when the invaders landed at Risdon Cove.

[92] Morgan, *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania*, p. 166.
[93] Governor Macquarie, in a despatch of 22 March 1815 to Earl Bathurst, Secretary of State for the Colonies, stated that Geils 'In the exercise of his temporary power ... displayed not only a sordid mean and covetous disposition, but, in many instances, shewed himself also venal and corrupt.' *HRA* Series I, Vol. VII, p. 460.
[94] McKay, *Journals of the Land Commissioners*, p. xiv.

Chapter Five

Beautiful extensive plains: dispossession and settlement, 1813-1824

They founded a colony whose very first step was an act of injustice: robbing the Aborigines of their land. They then robbed them of all sources of food by occupying the rivers and cultivating the land.

Baron Charles von Hügel, 1834.[1]

A 'happy State of Peace and Tranquility': the Governor inspects the colony

From November 1811 to January 1812 Governor Lachlan Macquarie carried out an inspection of Van Diemen's Land. After spending some time in Hobart Town and at the new settlements along the Derwent River, he took a party overland to Port Dalrymple, spending six days on the rough road between Hobart Town and Launceston. The nature of the country traversed by the party impressed the Governor: on the 'Antill Plains' south of the Elizabeth River (near the site of the present Campbell Town) Macquarie noted in his journals that the land was 'beautifully interspersed with trees and contains good pasturage for cattle'.[2] The route generally followed the line of road surveyed by Charles Grimes in March 1807.[3] Macquarie's enthusiasm for the country was repeated in his despatch of 17 November 1812, to the Earl of Liverpool, Secretary of State for the Colonies, when he reported:

> I passed through Very fine, extensive Tracks [sic] of Land, Well-Watered, and extremely well Calculated for both Grazing and Agriculture. The numerous Natives in this Tract of Country are however Sometimes hostile, so as to render it dangerous for single Persons to travel without an Escort.[4]

Macquarie recommended the establishment of three or four military posts along the route for the protection of travellers. The country was that of the several bands of the *Mairremmenner* People. As no reports of clashes between Aborigines and settlers outside the settled areas had been made in Hobart Town during this period, the report of hostile 'Natives' probably stemmed from Port Dalrymple, where early clashes with Aborigines had occurred. Lieutenant-Governor William Patterson, in charge at Port Dalrymple, had, in April 1807, reported the depredations of escaped convicts –

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[1] von Hügel, *New Holland Journal, November 1833-October 1834,* , p. 146.
[2] Macquarie, *Journals,* p. 65.
[3] *HRA,* Series III, Vol. I, n. 333, p. 842. This route was an easier track than that of Lieutenant Thomas Laycock in the first traverse between the two settlements in February 1807.
[4] *HRA,* Series I, Vol. VII, p. 584. Oxley, in his report on the 'Country between Launceston and the River Derwent' was even more effusive, claiming 'Never did the Sun in his large Round shine upon a finer Country, Well watered by lakes, small rivers, and Chains of Lagoons' (*HRA,* Series III, Vol. I, John Oxley, *Remarks on Settlement of Port Dalrymple,* p. 761.

'*desperate* and *dangerous Banditti*' – living in the 'woods and Mountains' around the settlement, and sought extra soldiers for protection against the 'Banditti' and the 'occasional Irruptions of the Savage Natives'.[5] However, the Aborigines were not completely invisible in the Midlands; while travelling north of Salt Pan Plains Macquarie noted the fires burning to the west on the lower Central Plateau.

The small populations of the settlements at Hobart Town and Port Dalrymple were indications of their relative unimportance. In the muster of January and February 1810, the Derwent settlement had a population of 1062 and Port Dalrymple 259. In the muster of 22 November 1814, there were 1444 people in the Derwent Settlement, and 454 in Port Dalrymple, of whom 302 and 85 respectively were convicts.[6] The total population of almost 2000 colonists probably approximated the total numbers of Aborigines in the north-east, the east coast and the south-east, but no-one had attempted a census even if that had been possible.[7] By 1814 the two settlements had not expanded much beyond the early boundaries, with land grants confined to the immediate vicinity of the townships. A total of 43,000 acres had been granted to settlers, the bulk during 1813. Macquarie had, however, begun the process of encouraging immigration to the new colonies. In his despatch of 7 October 1814 to Lord Bathurst, Secretary of State for the Colonies, he offered his opinion on the 'Expediency of granting greater Encouragement than heretofore to Persons desirous of becoming Settlers in Van Diemen's Land'. He noted that

> Considering Van Diemen's Land by far a richer and better Soil than this Country, and possessed of a fine Climate, it is My decided Opinion that it would be highly judicious to hold out every reasonable Encouragement to Industrious persons to proceed thither from England as Free Settlers, provided they be possessed of A Certain Degree of Property to enable them to Commence and pursue their farming Concerns without being a Burthen on the Government.[8]

The Midlands were about to be invaded, and the cultural landscape of the *Mairremmener* disrupted forever.

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[5] *HRA,* Series I, Vol. VII, p. 307. Macquarie to Lord Bathurst. Macquarie considered that 'The proposed Military Stations Would soon disperse these Depredators, and finally bring them to Justice. They Would Also Check the occasional Irruptions of the Savage Natives, and reciprocally prevent their being Cruelly treated by the Bush Rangers'. *HRA,* Series III, Vol. I, p. 671.

[6] *HRA,* Series I, Vol. VII, p. 285; Series III, Vol. II, p. 75.

[7] However in March 1819, Lieutenant-Governor Sorell by General Order directed the Resident Magistrate for the District of Pitt Water and Coal River, and the District Constables in all other districts to 'forthwith take an account of all the Native Youths and Children which are Resident with any of the Settlers or Stock keepers; stating from whom and in what manner they were obtained'. *Government and General Orders, 13 March 1819, Hobart Town Gazette,* 27 March 1819. No record of the account is extant.

[8] *HRA,* Series I, Vol. VII, p.306.

A peculiar character: the new administrator of a 'mere camp'[9].

The second lieutenant-governor of Van Diemen's Land, Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Davey, took office on 4 February 1813. He had served in the Marines since 1778, and had been a volunteer guard on the First Fleet in 1788. Davey secured the position in Van Diemen's Land through the patronage of the local parliamentarian from his home village. His reputation in England appeared to be suspect, as, in a private despatch to Henry Goulburn, the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies, Governor Macquarie (referring to a private letter sent to him by Goulburn concerning Davey) advised:

> I shall use every possible precaution to prevent [Davey] making any improper use of the authority He is invested with ... the moment I discover that He sanctions any peculation of the Public property, or applies any part thereof, or any Public Money he may be entrusted with, to His own use, I shall take immediate measures to prevent a repetition thereof.[10]

The instructions issued to Davey by Macquarie reflected his intention to keep a close check on the new Lieutenant-Governor. Apart from strict accounting on a quarterly basis of all activities in the colony, Davey was prohibited from making grants of land or cattle, and limited only to the role of making recommendations to the Governor on these matters. Instruction thirteen repeated in the usual terms the need to 'Conciliate the Friendship and Good Will of the Natives ... to live in Amity and Kindness with them' and to punish all acts of violence against them.[11] It was a less than confident beginning, and by April 1814 Macquarie was expressing disquiet at Davey's abilities, declaring that although 'an honest Man and means well ... he is so dissipated in his Manners and Morals, so expensive in his habits, so very thoughtless and volatile, and so very easily imposed upon ... that I cannot but think him a very unfit man for so very important a Situation'.[12] By March 1815, disquiet had turned to distrust: Macquarie requested Davey's recall, claiming dishonest financial administration, clandestine dealings in trade and smuggling of spirits, and 'an extraordinary degree of frivolity and low buffoonery in his Manners', rendering him unfit for the post. Davey exacerbated the situation in April 1815 by proclaiming martial law over the island in an attempt to suppress the severe outbreak of crimes committed by escaped convicts – 'bushrangers' – a measure *ultra vires* the office of Lieutenant-Governor. Although proving effective to a degree, and applauded by the settlers, it drew the censure of the

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[9] West, *The History of Tasmania,* p. 47.
[10] pp. 789, 790.
[11] p. 734.
[12] *HRA,* Series I, Vol. VIII, p. 242.

Governor.[13] The cumulative effect of Macquarie's complaints against Davey resulted in his recall by Earl Bathurst on 18 April 1816, to 'take his departure from this Country by the earliest opportunity'. In the same despatch Lieutenant-Colonel William Sorell – an army officer – was appointed 'in his room'. The compensation for Davey's recall included a grant of a further 2000 acres of land in the Coal River district, added to the 3000 acres he had previously been granted, making him a major landowner in the colony.[14] It was an ignominious end for Davey. He had pleaded his case against the dismantling of his character in a letter to his patron, the Earl of Harrowby, dated 14 December 1817, declaring that the 'vile reports of me ... of which groundless and extravagant as they are' were refuted as 'dark and invidious insinuations ... Governor Macquarie's' Letters ... are filled with the most fallacious accounts of my conduct by the adoption of Martial Law.' He gave notice of his intention to appeal to a 'tribunal competent to decide' on the rightness of the actions of his administration.[15] As John West pointed out, Davey's regime had achieved some progress in the development of the colony:

> The ports were opened for general commerce (June 1813): houses of trade were established ... [the] resources of the colony were developed: Mr Birch, an enterprising merchant, fitted out a vessel to survey the western coasts (1816), and Captain Kelly discovered Macquarie Harbour and Port Davey: Captain Florance found a new species of pine, very highly valued by artificers ... The whale fishery was considerably enlarged: corn was exported, the plough introduced ... a mill erected ... the foundation of St. David's Church was laid ... a civil court for the recovery of debts ... was established.

After two previous attempts, a newspaper – the *Hobart Town Gazette and Southern Reporter* – was established by Andrew Bent, and became the journal of record for the government.[16] This record of achievement in the face of very limited resources and a small population was laudable, but, as other officials and settlers were to discover, the enmity of the Governor, once aroused, resulted in persistent and unforgiving disapproval of any actions. Davey surrendered his post to Lieutenant-Governor Sorell on 9 April 1817.

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[13] West, *The History of Tasmania.*, pp. 458-461, 566-568. However, Shaw pointed out the delay in ordering a revocation of martial law – six months after its declaration – was perhaps a sign of tacit approval by Macquarie: n. 78, p. 563.

[14] *HRA,* Series I, Vol. IX, pp. 113, 114; *HRA,* Series III, Vol. I, pp. 165, 166. The grants of land along the Coal River were the beginnings of the disruption of *Mairremmener* culture – the Coal River was the route of a vital nomadic road.

[15] pp. 634, 635.

[16] West, *The History of Tasmania,* pp. 47, 48. The 'new species of pine' – Huon pine – became the valued source of boat building timber.

Land for the taking: expansion of the new settlements

Lieutenant-Governor Davey had carried out his instructions concerning land grants, referring all requests to Macquarie in New South Wales. Upon his appointment, the settlement at Port Dalrymple was made a dependency of the Derwent settlement, placing its control under a commandant subordinate to the Lieutenant-Governor in Hobart Town. However, land grants for both settlements were few after the catch-up grants made by Macquarie in 1813. The respective grants made year-by-year during Davey's term were:

1814 – two grants totalling 960 acres.

1815 – two grants totalling 1370 acres

1816 – nine grants totalling 4790 acres

1817 – 111 grants totalling 17,158 acres (including 2000 acres to Davey)

The grants in 1814 and 1815 were made to officials or their wives. The 1816 and 1817 grants represented the next phase of expansion of the Derwent and Port Dalrymple settlements, the former into the country of the *Mairremmener* People, mainly extensions of the Coal River and New Norfolk districts.[17] Many of the grants were one hundred acres or less, made to former soldiers or emancipated convicts. Again, they probably represented a catch-up, resulting from the excessive workload of an undermanned and inefficient Land Survey Department. In addition, as Sharon Morgan has pointed out, although the leasing of Crown land was not formalised until 1828 many settlers spread into lands outside the settled areas without permission or legal right, seeking better grazing for their herds and flocks.[18] The best of these unalienated ("waste") lands were found in the Midlands, along the Hobart Town to Launceston line of road, cutting through the centre of the *Mairremmener* country. Yet, even with these intrusions, few clashes between Aborigines and settlers were recorded during Davey's administration. A measure of the relative calm was demonstrated in a General Order made by Lieutenant-Governor Sorell on 13 March 1819, in again proscribing 'outrages' against the Aborigines, noting,

> if the Natives were intent upon Destruction [of stockkeepers and stock], and if they were incessantly to Watch for Opportunities of effecting it, the Mischief done to them by the Owners of Cattle or Sheep, which are now dispersed for grazing over so Great a Part of the Interior Country, would be increased a Hundred Fold. But so far from any systematic Plan for destroying the Stock or People, being pursued by the Native Tribes, their Meetings with the

[17] Morgan, *Land Settlement,* pp. 16-18.
[18] p. 19.

> Herdsmen appear generally to be incidental; and it is the Opinion of the best informed Persons who have been longest in the Settlement, that the former are seldom the Assailants.[19]

The comments in this general order reveal much activity that remained unreported. Firstly, the statement that cattle and sheep were dispersed widely over the interior reflects the unauthorised use of unalienated land, much of which lay beyond the limits of settlement, including considerable areas on the Central Plateau. The high plains along the Shannon and Ouse Rivers were well-known to stock keepers, as indicated in the report by George Evans in December 1820, following his exploration of the lower Plateau. Evans noted that the land at the junction of the two rivers was 'a fine track [sic] ... called by the stockmen Native Hutt Plains.' This was the country of the *Larmairremener* band of the *Mairremmener* People. The probable presence of stock indicated the beginning of the practice of transhumance – the driving of stock onto the Plateau for summer grazing. The existence of wild cattle in this location was noted by Dr James Ross in his journal of an excursion to Lake Echo in 1823, and by Lieutenant-Governor Sorell during his 'Tour' of the high country in December 1820, when he observed that 'Triffet Senr ... keeps stock on the Shannon'.[20] Secondly, Sorell noted that apparent meetings between Aborigines and stock keepers were 'incidental', and that clashes had taken place, initiated by the stock keepers. The extent of these clashes was apparently minimal and the detail not recorded, but the cultural landscape of the *Mairremmener* had obviously changed for the worse, with alien men and animals now a fixed presence in their country: new 'beings' that had to be incorporated into their culture.

As to conciliating the friendship and goodwill of the Aborigines, West described an incident reported in the *Van Diemen's Land Gazette* of 20 August 1814, where 'a servant of this governor [Davey] employed at South Arm, suddenly came upon a tribe of thirty-six persons. A native woman, living with a white, willingly went forward to communicate the wishes of the Governor [to establish friendly intercourse].' South Arm was the country of the *Pydairrerme* band, people whose previous contact with the settlers had probably included the clash at Risdon Cove, and the several clashes with kangaroo hunters as discussed in chapter four. The 'natives' visited Hobart Town, where Davey 'endeavoured to win their confidence'. They

[19] Government and General Orders, 13 March 1819, *Hobart Town Gazette*, 27 March 1819.
[20] Ross, *Recollections of an Excursion to Lake Echo*, pp. 14, 21. Ross noted a herd 'of about 500 of Mr Lord's wild cattle' on the Bashan Plains; Sorell, *HRA*, Series III, Vol. IV, p. 644.

remained in the settlement 'for weeks', but 'having received some offence from worthless Europeans, they retreated to their woods, and never returned.' West elaborated the story by claiming all the Aborigines except one woman drowned in an attempt to reach 'Bruni Island'. The report in the *Gazette* concluded that 'They were afterwards landed on the Island of Bruni at their own request.'[21] Peaceful interaction between the settlers in Hobart Town and the Aborigines – the visits of the 'tame mobs' (particularly those noted by Knopwood) – is noted in chapter four. However, in general there is little evidence of a concerted attempt by Davey to set an example by opening up friendly relations with the Aborigines; rather, it appeared that the unwritten policy adopted was to continue to ignore them – a furtherance of Collins' theme of "invisibility".

Sealers and slavers: the abduction of Aboriginal women

The reports of clashes (often described as 'outrages') during this period were few for the obvious reason of the dangers of self-incrimination. However, the fact that assaults against the Aborigines had taken place is evidenced by a letter of 28 September 1815, from William Stewart to Colonial Secretary John Campbell, complaining of the activities of 'a Banditti of Bushrangers and others' carrying out sealing in Bass Strait, after robbing settlers of boats, arms and dogs, and other property. The sealing was carried out in whale boats 'who clear out from the Derwent or Port Dalrymple'. Stewart claimed that

> they have a custom of getting Native Women ... among them, who they mostly obtain by force and keep them as Slaves or Negroes, hunting and foraging for them, who they transfer and dispose of from one to another as their own property; very few of whom ever see their Native Home ... by way of punishment [they] half hang them, cut their heads with Clubs in a Shocking Manner, or flog them most unmercifully with Cats made from Kangaroo Sinews; several of them have two to six women...[22]

Stewart was the owner of the colonial merchant sloop *Fly*, which operated in Bass Strait[23], and his complaint may have stemmed from the effects of illegal competition; however his comments on the Aboriginal women tally with those of James Kelly in 1816, when he reported that 'every [sealer in the Bass Strait Islands] should have

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[21] West, *The History of Tasmania, op. cit.*, pp. 264, 265 & n.13 p. 623. No source is given for the "elaboration". The 'native woman' who acted as an emissary may well have been the woman living with Richard Campbell (see under). The implication that the Aborigines were *Nuennone* from Bruny Island does not appear to be correct.

[22] *HRA,* Series III, Vol. II, p. 576.

[23] pp. 709 et seq. for details of Stewart's activities and legal actions. Stewart had an axe to grind with the government.

from two to five of these native women for their own use and benefit'.[24] While many of the Aboriginal women would have been seized from the peoples of the north-west, north and north-east, the prolific seal colonies on the islands in Great Oyster Bay encouraged sealers into that area, and the remoteness of this location from the settled areas made detection of their activities unlikely. Stewart stated that many of the sealing boats sailed from the Derwent, and there can be little doubt that the similar seizures of Aboriginal women also took place along this remote coast and from areas inland. Knopwood noted in July 1814, that a settler at South Arm, Richard Campbell, 'had a native woman living with him.' As noted above, South Arm was at the southern limit of the country of the *Pydairrerme* band.[25]

The attacks that took place on settlers may well have had their genesis in part from the abduction of women, but the few attacks recorded between 1814 to 1817 generally involved stock and shepherds. Knopwood, for example, reported that Aborigines 'had killd [sic] and destroyed' 930 of Morgan's sheep on 'Scantlands' Plains in November 1814.[26] 'Scantlands' [Scanlans] Plains were well outside the settled districts, east of the present Oatlands, and some distance from the probable location of Morgan's property in the Coal River district. On 27 July 1816, cattle were driven off John Beamont's property south of the Cross Marsh, an area on the fringe of the settled districts. On 31 August 1816, twenty 'natives' attacked the three stock keepers at the Government stockyards at New Norfolk, throwing over forty spears. Three Aborigines were shot dead, and one taken prisoner. On the 7 September 1816, the herd of Thomas McNeelance at Jericho was attacked and two cows killed. This was again a property on the fringe of the settled districts. On 14 October 1816, settler James Daley, one other man and two women were travelling in a cart at Salt Pan Plains, when they were attacked by some fifty 'natives'. Daley repulsed the attack with one pistol shot. The *Hobart Town Gazette* noted that 'no man ought to go into the woods without his gun'.[27] The nature of these attacks, the time of year, and the numbers of Aborigines involved are indicative of the migratory east-west movements of the *Mairremmener* People as described in chapter two, the locations involved in the

[24] Calder, *The Circumnavigations of Van Diemen's Land,* pp. 26, 27.
[25] Knopwood, *Diary,* p. 182.
[26] p. 1815.
[27] 1816 details from *Hobart Town Gazette,* 31 August, 7 September & 19 October 1816 & Plomley, *The Aboriginal/ Settler Clash,* p. 56.

clashes being in the path of the migrations; particularly those properties in the Jericho area, the point of conjunction of the three Aboriginal roads from the east coast. In addition, the attack on the government stockyards at New Norfolk is symptomatic of the pattern of previous and many later attempts to expel the alien "beings" from the country of the bands.

Banditti in the bush: bushrangers and Aborigines

The epidemic of bushranging during Davey's administration also had an effect on the *Mairremmener* People. A well-recorded incident concerned the case of the convict bushranger Michael Howe, who sometimes led a gang of absconders in a series of depredations against settlers in the New Norfolk and Pitt Water districts (and later on the lower parts of the Central Plateau) during the years 1815 to 1818. The anonymous 'narrative' of Howe's exploits, published by Andrew Bent in 1818, claimed that he was accompanied 'by a black native girl named Mary with whom Howe cohabitated.'[28] In a close call with a party of soldiers from the 46th Regiment at Jericho in April 1817, Howe 'in order to facilitate his own escape ... fired at [his female Aboriginal] companion, who from fatigue was unable to keep pace with him.' Slightly wounded, the woman then acted as a guide to the military parties in their searches of the country about the Shannon River.[29] Howe was eventually killed on the Shannon River on 21 October 1818, by a small party led by Private William Pugh of the 48th Regiment.[30] While the value of the Bent pamphlet as an historic record has been questioned, the report of the Aboriginal woman as Howe's companion has persisted in Van Diemen's Land historiography.[31] The knowledge of the area exhibited by 'Mary' suggested that she was of the *Larmairremener* band associated with the Great Lake region. In a despatch to Governor Macquarie in October 1817, Lieutenant-Governor Sorell, in sending 'Mary' to Sydney 'at her own request', noted that the success in tracking the bushrangers was owed to her and he requested she be

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[28] *Michael Howe: The Last and Worst of the Bush Rangers of Van Diemen's Land*, A Facsimile Reproduction by Platypus Publications, Hobart, 1966. Original published by Andrew Bent, Hobart Town, 1818, p. 7. Lieutenant-Governor Sorell made a similar report to Macquarie in a despatch dated 16 May 1817 – *HRA,* Series III, vol, II, p. 234.

[29] *Michael Howe,* p. 18.

[30] pp. 32, 33. Dr. John Ross, in the journal of his 'Excursion to Lake Echo' in March 1823, noted 'the ruins of a hut belonging to the notorious bushman Michael Howe ... This was doubtless the place from which he last emerged when he met his death at the Shannon hut ...' pp. 21,22.

[31] Shaw, in a commentary on the pamphlet, noted that 'Dr. G Mackaness has concluded it was written by Thomas Wells ... It has curiosity value rather than literary merit.' Shaw in West, *The History of Tasmania,* n. 86, p. 645. Wells was Lieutenant-Governor Sorell's clerk.

placed permanently on the Store, and returned to Van Diemen's Land 'at a future period'.[32] Although records of other seizures of Aboriginal women (apart from hearsay) are not extant, the presence of escaped convicts and convict stock-keepers outside the settled areas would have ensured contact with the *Mairremmener* People on the Central Plateau, in the Midlands and along the east coast. Not all such contacts were violent, as witnessed by the willingness of some women to accompany the Bass Strait sealers, and even by 'Mary's' acceptance of Howe when she could easily have escaped. The very remoteness of the parts of the island to where stock had been taken ensured little or no oversight by officials in Hobart Town, and, in the absence of reported violence, it is unlikely that they cared.

A stolen generation: the abduction of Aboriginal children

The abduction of Aboriginal children also became a matter of concern during Davey's governorship. He issued a proclamation in June 1814 declaring that 'he had found proof "'that the resentment of [the Aborigines] has been justly excited by a most barbarous and inhumane mode of proceeding ... viz., the robbery of their children" and expressed his "utter indignation and abhorrence thereof."'[33] His successor, Lieutenant-Governor Sorell, in reinforcing the point made above on the lack of supervision of convict servants and absconders in the remote areas, noted in the General Order of 13 March 1819, that:

> It is undeniable that in many former Instances Cruelties have been perpetrated repugnant to Humanity and disgraceful to the British Character, while few attempts can be traced on the Part of the Colonists to conciliate the Native People, or to make them sensible that Peace and Forebearance are the Objects desired. The Impressions remaining from earlier Injuries are kept up by the occasional Outrages of Miscreants whose Scene of Crime is so remote as to render detection difficult; and who sometimes wantonly fire at and kill the Men, and at others pursue the Women for the purpose of compelling them to abandon their Children – This last Outrage is perhaps the most certain of all to excite in the Sufferers a strong thirst for Revenge against all White Men, and to incite the Natives to take Vengeance indiscriminately according to the general Practice of uncivilized People, wherever in their Migrations they fall in with the Herds and Stockmen.[34]

Sorell ordered the 'account' of Aboriginal children held by settlers and stockkeepers, and proscribed the 'Possession of a Native Youth or Child' without proof of the

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[32] *HRA,* Series III, Vol. II, p. 284. This is a rare record of appreciation of and reward for the services of a Tasmanian Aborigine. (Note the dishonour of a promise to 'Tegg', above). Bonwick claimed that 'Poor Mary died in the Hobart Town Hospital'. No reference or date is given. Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians,* p. 47.

[33] Plomley, *Friendly Mission,* pp. 26, 27.

[34] *Government and General Order,* 13 March 1819, *Hobart Town Gazette,* 27 March 1819.

consent of its parents.[35] Notwithstanding Davey's and Sorell's proclamations, numbers of Aboriginal children were taken into settler households. In a return of baptisms within the district of Hobart Town for the years 1804 to 1819, Knopwood listed twenty-six Aboriginal baptisms, ranging from one in 1809 to seven in 1819, the year of Sorell's proclamation. None were baptised in 1814, the year Davey expressed his 'abhorrence' at the stealing of the children.[36] In his subsequent testimony to Commissioner Bigge, Knopwood, when asked if the baptized Aboriginal children had been

> brought in by their Parents, or are they Inmates of the Settlers' houses in the Country?,

artfully replied that:

> Some have been brought into the Hospital when sick, and seeing them there I have baptised them; they have also been brought in by the Settlers with whom they happened to be staying.[37]

The reply carefully avoided the question of parental consent. The children held within the town and baptised were at least were dignified with a shadow of legitimacy, given that the recording of their births and the bestowing of English names signified their existence. Later records indicate that many Aboriginal children were kept on properties in the outer areas of settlement, and perhaps outside the settled areas, where their existence went largely unacknowledged and unknown, in defiance of government orders.[38]

It is clear that Davey did little to conciliate, enter into friendly relations or protect the Aborigines, many of whom were now very visible *Mairremmener* bands at the edges of settlement, and hearsay reports of clashes, apparently with the stock keepers or bushrangers as the aggressors, were becoming more frequent. Proclamations and expressions of indignation and abhorrence provided little comfort

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[35] The improbability of enforcement of this order is patent – proof of consent would have been next to impossible, even if the intention was understood by the Aborigines involved. As commented above, few if any settlers spoke or understood any of the Aboriginal languages. The conceit (and deceit) in making such unenforceable orders was continued throughout all Van Diemen's Land administrations – see Lieutenant-Governor Arthur's proclamations under.

[36] *A Return of Baptisms, Marriages and Deaths within the District of Hoabrt Town, Van Diemen's Land, from 12 March 1804 to 21 December 1819, HRA,* Series III, Vol. III, p. 510. The return was probably prepared at the request of Commissioner J. T. Bigge.

[37] *HRA* Series III, Vol. III, p. 365. Examination of 3 April 1820.

[38] Plomley, for example, listed numbers of Aboriginal children kept in Launceston. - *Friendly Mission,* n. 107, pp. 445,446. John Batman kept an Aboriginal boy, Rolepana (Ben), on his farm at Kingston, and had him baptized in Launceston in June 1830 – A. Campbell, *John Batman and the Aborigines,* Malmsbury: Kibble Books, n.d., p. 40; also Plomley, pp.910, 911, 913, on attempts to make Batman surrender the two Aboriginal boys he had removed.

for those left behind following murders and abductions, and the blind eye turned to the illegal expansion of stock-grazing into the interior, beyond the settled areas, began the process of disruption of the nomadic culture of the *Mairremmener.*

'A man of good understanding': the fate of the Mairremmener *under Lieutenant-Governor Sorell*

With the recall of Davey, the British Government and the Colonial Office must have been concerned to ensure the appointment of a more competent administrator to the colony. The failures of the initial two appointees would have weighed heavily upon the London politicians and bureaucrats, notwithstanding the relative unimportance of the tiny settlements in Van Diemen's Land.[39] Colonies were expected to be self-sufficient within a short time, or be of such strategic importance as to warrant their support. In the thirteen years since colonization, Van Diemen's Land had no such justifications, the continuing cost of maintaining the settlements being a burden on the Treasury, even given Governor Macquarie's high opinion of their potential. The new lieutenant-governor was Colonel William Sorrell, a former army officer who had sold his commission in 1813. He had apparently used influential contacts to obtain the position, but brought with him the elements of scandal that were to again disrupt the colony's administration. Sorell had left his wife and seven children unsupported in England, and had sailed to New South Wales with the wife and child of Lieutenant William Kent, a fellow officer who had successfully sued Sorell for criminal conversation. Sorell also brought the three sons of his liaison with Mrs Kent.[40] Leonie Mickleborough noted that Macquarie had met Sorell, Kent and his wife at the Cape of Good Hope on their voyage to New South Wales, and was therefore aware of Sorell's relationship with Louisa Kent, but was impressed with his abilities, describing him as 'a man of good understanding, energy and firmness'.[41] It was probably in the interests of both men to see and seek the best in each other.

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[39] An appropriate appointment also engaged the concern of Governor Macquarie, when, in seeking the recall of Davey, he requested Lord Bathurst to appoint 'some person of greater energy of Mind and of More honourable principles.' Quoted in L. C. Mickleborough, *William Sorell in Van Diemen's Land, Lieutenant-Governor, 1817-24: A Golden Age?*, Hobart: Blubber Head Press, 2004, pp. 15, 16.

[40] L. C. Mickleborough, 'Lieutenant-Governor Colonel William Sorell: Appearances of Respectability', pp.1-8: www.femalefactory.com.au/FFRG/pdfs/Sorell.pdf, accessed 5 February 2007. Criminal conversation was an action in tort for adultery, under which a husband could recover damages against a man living with his wife. The action was abolished in 1857. Holdsworth's *A History of English Law*, Vol.I, London: Methuen & Co., 1903-1972, pp. 623, 624. Sorell was fined £3,000 for his offence

[41] Mickleborough, p.3.

Macquarie needed a willing and able assistant to maintain and progress his plans for Van Diemen's Land, particularly where a rapid increase in immigration was proposed; and Sorell needed the support and goodwill of the governor to succeed in his new post, assistance that Davey had failed to gain. The development of the settlements required the things denied the previous administrators: that is, competent administrative support, adequate material supplies, and sufficient convict labour to ensure the success of the colony. Having gained Macquarie's confidence at the beginning, Sorell was off to an auspicious start.

***The portents of war: early clashes between the settlers and the* Mairremmener**

The instructions given to Sorell mirrored those given to Davey. He was denied the authority to make grants of land, and he was enjoined to conciliate the friendship and goodwill of the 'Natives'.[42] Sorell issued a general order warning against the committing of outrages against the Aborigines, threatening arrest and trial.[43] His immediate concern was, however, the restoration of law and order by the suppression of the activities of the bushrangers, and in particular, the capture of Michael Howe, now the most notorious escapee remaining at large. Proclamations were issued and military parties organised, resulting in Howe's surrender, pardon, second escape and killing, as related above. Numbers of other absconders were also recaptured. The success of strategies adopted by Sorell was recognised by Macquarie in 1818, in commending him for the 'almost total Suppression' of the bushrangers.[44] In an early capture in March 1817, Ensign Mahon and his party, having shot and killed two bushrangers and wounded a third, pursued 'three civilized Black Natives', who had 'committed a robbery on Mr Beamont's cart at the Green Water Holes'. Two of the Aborigines escaped; the third was captured, and sent 'into Hobart Town, with the articles [Mahon] found with him.'[45]

While relatively few violent clashes were occurring, a most serious one took place at Grindstone Bay on the east coast on 28 November 1818. A boat party of five men had been sealing and hunting kangaroos in the Oyster Bay area, and had left one

[42] *HRA,* Series III, Vol. II, pp. 183-187. To reinforce the direction in respect of land grants, Macquarie issued a general order on 14 December 1816, voiding all grants and leases made without his approval. *HRA*, Series III, Vol. II, pp. 191, 192.
[43] p. 187; *Hobart Town Gazette,* 24 May 1817.
[44] Mickleborough, *William Sorell,* p. 20.
[45] *HRA,* Series III, Vol. II, pp. 173, 174. There is no record of the fate of the captured Aborigine.

of the party, John Kemp, ashore with the skins and the catch, together with the kangaroo dogs, muskets, ammunition and knives, while they went for more seal skins. On returning to Grindstone Bay they found Kemp 'cut and mangled in a manner too shocking to relate.' The articles left with the victim had been taken or destroyed, and a dog killed. When the men were recovering Kemp's body, the Aborigines rushed from the bush and forced them to retreat to their boat. Nearly twenty Aborigines were observed, one being 'a native girl, who had been some time among those at present, walking about the streets of Hobart Town ... She often in an apparently friendly, but artful manner entreated the party to return, which they very prudently declined'. *The Hobart Town Gazette* 'regretted that the muskets and ammunition are now in the possession of these natives, as their natural fear of fire-arms may be in some degree removed'. It also noted that Oyster Bay was 'a favourite resort of the natives, no less than 500 having been assembled there at one time.'[46] The Grindstone Bay coast was the country of the *Larmairremener* band, the area where sealers had been attacked in 1805, as noted in chapter four, and the band was to gain a fearsome reputation in the coming years. The Aboriginal name for the bay was *Pryhappenner,* signifying the estuary of the present Eight-mile Creek, a stream rising in the Eastern Tiers within the present Buckland Military Training Area, where numerous Aboriginal quarry sites were located, and near the route of the *Markenner* – the Aboriginal road which followed the course of the Little Swanport River.[47] The destruction of seal and kangaroo skins repeated the pattern and rationale of other attacks: firstly, resisting the unauthorised removal of 'beings' from the band's country, a place of high value in Aboriginal culture given the stone quarry sites; and secondly, the interference with women of the band, implied by the supposedly friendly actions of the 'native girl'.

The only other reported killing of a settler in the country of the *Mairremmener* People during the years 1817 to 1822 was that of settler John Huxley in 1819, when travelling from Jericho to Jerusalem. The attack may well have been carried out by the *Larmairremener* band while migrating along the Aboriginal road. In a further incident, two stock-keepers were wounded and sheep were speared in an attack on the

[46] *Hobart Town Gazette,* 28 November 1818. The removal or theft of firearms became a standard practice of the Aborigines. As mentioned above, there is no record of them using the weapons against the settlers. The number of '500 assembled', while perhaps an exaggeration, reflects the role of Oyster Bay (particularly at the Little Swanport River mouth) as a gathering point for the bands of the *Mairremmener.*

[47] Taylor, *Palawa Place Names,* pp. 44, 167.

Macquarie River at its junction with the Isis River, in April 1819. One Aborigine was reportedly killed. The attack was said to have resulted from the 'ill-treatment of a native woman by some stock-keepers'.[48] The 'ill-treatment' may have been the direct cause of the clash, but the pattern of stock destruction in the country of the *Mairremmener* bands was to be an increasing occurrence over the next few years, and again reflected the desire to remove the alien beings from their country, perhaps in this instance by the *Marwemairrener* band of the Campbell Town district. The relatively few clashes during this time were a factor of the still-largely unoccupied country of the *Mairremmener.* No settlement would take place on the east coast until 1821, although Silas Gatehouse had earlier placed stock on land at Spring Bay and installed a convict shepherd, a further example of the unauthorised movements into Aboriginal country.[49] The Midlands, on the other hand, were about to be invaded.

'Having especial trust in your approved Wisdom and Fidelity': the Commissioner enquires into the state of the colony

In April 1817, Earl Bathurst, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, raised the issues of the role and value of the colony of New South Wales. In essence, he considered that its role as a prison for transportees was not achieving the objective of punishment, and that its potential as a destination for immigrants had not been satisfactorily investigated in spite of the recommendations of successive governors and others. In short, he asked whether the new possession should be a gaol or a self-sustaining and successful colony.[50] To answer the questions, the British Government appointed a commission of inquiry with a single commissioner, John Bigge, a former chief judge of the Colony of Trinidad. Bigge's instructions noted that the New Holland settlements were not 'established with any view to Territorial or Commercial Advantages', and 'they must chiefly be considered Receptacles for Offenders' to serve as punishment and deterrent against the commission of crimes. The instructions therefore concentrated on investigation of the convict transportation system, but

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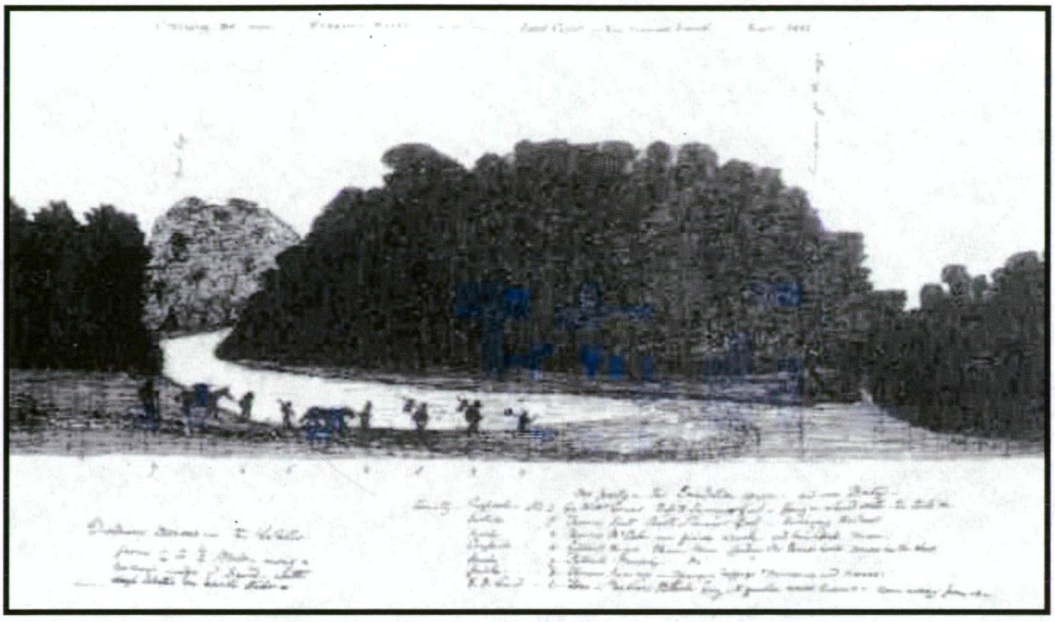
[48] Plomley, *The Aboriginal/Settler Clash,* p. 58, for details of both clashes.

[49] L. Nyman, *The East Coasters: the Early Pioneering History of the East Coast of Tasmania,* Launceston: Regal Publications, 1990, p. 13. Silas Gatehouse was a Hobart Town merchant, and brother of George Gatehouse, merchant and brewer.

[50] J. Ritchie, *Punishment and Profit; The Reports of Commissioner John Bigge on the Colonies of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, 1822-1823; their origins, nature and significance,* Melbourne: Heinemann, 1970, pp. 1, 2. The promotion of Van Diemen's Land by Governor Macquarie as a place of immigration may have had some resonance with and influence on Earl Bathurst.

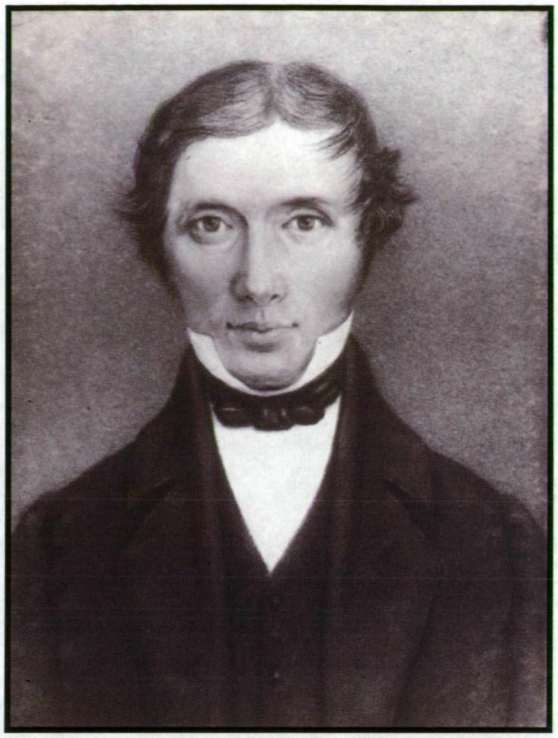
added broad powers to investigate the conduct of colonial officials, the judicial system, education and religious instruction, regulations that appeared at odds with British law, the distillation of spirits, the means of defraying the 'heavy expenditure' incurred in maintaining the settlements, and the place of emancipists in the new societies. Secret additional instructions directed Bigge to inquire into Lieutenant-Governor Sorell's domestic situation in view of information received about his adulterous relationship.[51] The instructions contained no reference to the indigenous peoples of the colony, and in the event Bigge's reports contained only the briefest mention of their existence.[52] Bigge took his inquiry to Van Diemen's Land in February 1821, and inspected the settlements at Hobart Town and Port Dalrymple over the next three months, examining most of the senior colonial officials, including Sorell on both his administration and on his domestic situation. With regard to land and the regulations for making grants, Bigge noted that Sorell had carried out extensive explorations of the country on the fringes of the existing settlements with a view to their expansion, particularly examining the land on the Clyde and Shannon Rivers and along the east coast at Oyster Bay. He recommended further explorations be carried out and that 'communication between York and Westmoreland Plains and the [Swan Port] coast should be opened'.[53] He noted the difficulties that had occurred in the Survey Department, and recommended a restructure to encourage efficient surveys of land grants to expedite land selection and the issue of titles; and he also recommended a new schedule of land grants for emancipists, for reservations for the clergy and for schoolmasters, and, in particular, a schedule of grants for settlers based on the 'real' capital brought by them from England; a measure aimed directly at encouraging immigration.[54] A particular proposal – to survey the unoccupied lands into districts containing not more than thirty-six square miles before selection and

[51] *HRA,* Series I, Vol. X, pp. 3-11; Ritchie, *Punishments and Profit,* pp. 61-64.
[52] Ritchie, p. 238; *Report of the Commissioner of Inquiry, on the State of Agriculture and Trade in the Colony of New South Wales,* 10 January 1823, pp. 73, 83.
[53] It took some time to act upon this recommendation. It was not until 24 May 1829, that Police Magistrate Thomas Anstey despatched Jorgen Jorgenson to seek a line of road from Oatlands to Waterloo Point – see *Report to Thomas Anstey of an expedition from Oatlands to Waterloo Point VDL, to investigate a new line of road, 24 May to 3 June 1829,* Hobart: State Library of Tasmania, Allport MSS Box 36 Folder 11.
[54] *Report of the Commissioner,* pp. 30, 31, 43, 47 & 48. The grants proposed ranged from 500 acres for a 'real' capital of £500 to 2,000 acres for £3,000, with some discretion for larger grants. 'Real' capital was not defined, and was to form the source of abuse of the land regulations. It is likely that Bigge intended it to represent cash or property to be used in the advance of agriculture.



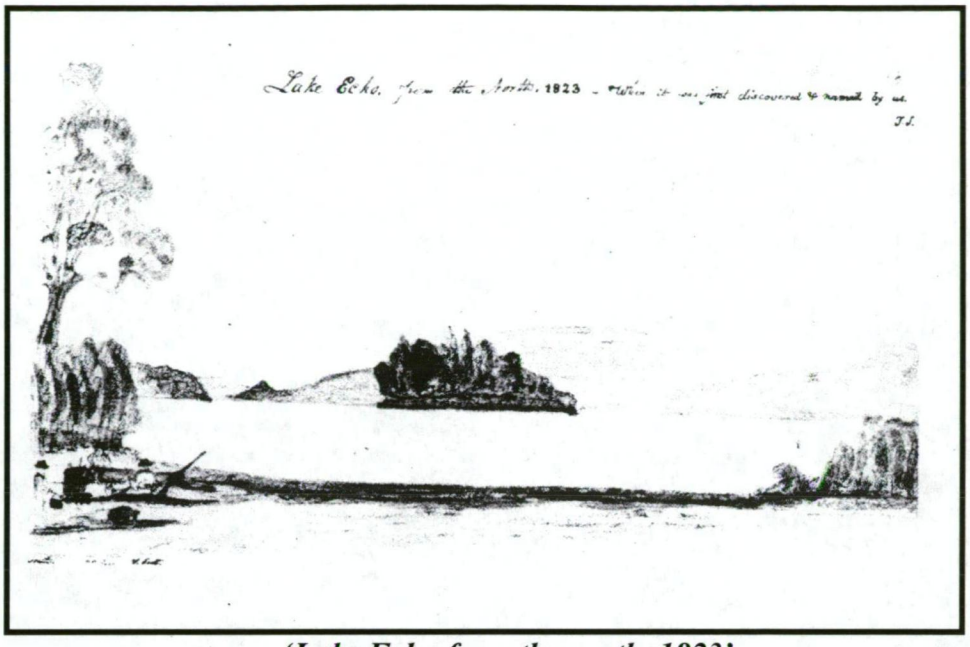
Evans' exploration party, east coast, Van Diemen's Land, 1821
Thomas Scott papers, Mitchell Library, Sydney. MS A1055
The party comprised George William Evans as leader; Thomas Scott, assistant surveyor, convict servants Dennis McCabe (guide and cook), Gilbert Hayes and Patrick Murphy (chain men), Thomas Kearney and 'Tom, a native boy'. Tom was probably Kickerterpoller – Tom Birch - who deserted the party.

Governor Lachlan Macquarie
Archives Office of Tasmania: AB713/1/11413



Colonel Thomas Davey, Lieutenant-Governor, Van Diemen's Land 1813-1816
J.W.Beattie, *The Governors of Tasmania*, 1896
Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts

Colonel William Sorell, Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land, 1816-1824
Archives Office of Tasmania: PH30/1/287



'Lake Echo from the south, 1823'

Sketch by Thomas Scott, assistant surveyor, Land Survey Department
Thomas Scott Papers, Mitchell Library, Sydney: MS A1055

This sketch was probably made during Scott's expedition to Lake Echo with Dr James Ross in 1823

Ruins of stock keepers huts, Lake Fergus, Central Plateau

Lake Fergus lays below Skittleball Hill, north of Lake Echo and south-west of the Great Lake
The lake was named by Corporal O'Brien while leading a search party for the bushranger Matthew Brady in 1824

Photos: G.K.Calder, February 2007

These huts, five in number, are situated on the lake shore on private property and have not been subjects of archaeological investigation. A musket barrel and flintlock recovered from one site would indicate a construction date in the early 1820s.

settlement – was to have a considerable effect on the rush to expand the Van Diemen's Land colony.[55]

Bigge returned to England in February 1821, after submitting for the governor's observations sixty-three charges against Macquarie's administration. Macquarie denied most of the charges as 'totally false or of trivial importance'.[56] Bigge took ten months to submit his first report, a further three to submit a second, and four months more to submit a third, the last reporting on a secondary object Bathurst submitted for investigation; that is, the potential of the colony as a destination for migrants. The first and second reports concentrated on the question of transportation and the role of New South Wales as a penal colony. The third report was accompanied by a confidential report on Sorell, which, while praising his '"extraordinary merit" as an administrator' stated that his 'domestic situation was not consonant with his remaining as lieutenant-governor'. Bigge 'gave Macquarie little credit as an administrator', but the governor had already resigned, and had been recalled and replaced by Sir Thomas Brisbane.[57] The new governor adopted in the main all of Bigge's recommendations, and the promise of land for free settlers with capital was to bring large numbers of immigrants to Van Diemen's Land, onto the 'beautiful and extensive plains' between the existing settlements and along the eastern littoral, through the country of the *Mairremmener.*

'One of the finest dependencies of the British Crown': the rush to emigrate

The policy for granting land to free settlers and emancipists had been set out in Macquarie's instructions upon his appointment in 1810. He was authorised to grant up to fifty acres to emancipated convicts, plus ten additional acres for every child in a family. Every free settler was to be granted one hundred acres over and above the quantity granted to emancipists. However, a discretionary provision allowed the governor to grant to 'any peculiarly Meritorious Settler, or well-deserving Emancipated Convict ... such further number of Acres ... as you in your Discretion

[55] p. 49. Thomas Scott's 1824 chart of Van Diemen's Land divided the settled areas into thirty-nine parishes. Sydney: Mitchell Library, TL MAP 880a.
[56] Ritchie, *Punishment and Profit,* pp. 205, 206.
[57] pp. 216-236.

shall judge proper'.[58] This was a discretionary power of patronage frequently exercised, with grants up to 3,000 acres made at times to favoured individuals. The making of such large grants was clearly contemplated, as Macquarie issued a regulation in November 1812 detailing the amounts of land that had to be cultivated within a period of five years. For example, ten acres of a thirty-acre grant was to be cleared, and at the other end of the scale, one hundred acres of a 2,000 acre grant.[59] Evidence of the government's concern at the abuse of the power in making land grants, particularly in the distant colony of Van Diemen's Land, came in the form of the instructions to Lieutenant-Governor Davey, where he was directed by Macquarie to refer all application for grants and leases to the governor-in-chief in Sydney for approval.[60] Macquarie's instructions to Sorell reiterated the direction, reminding the new lieutenant-governor that 'the Power of making Grants and Leases of Crown Lands ... are exclusively Vested in the Governor in Chief of the Territory'.[61] Further confirmation of the continuing abuse of the land grants policy appeared in the general order made by Macquarie on 14 December 1816, noted above, declaring grants made by Lieutenant-Governor Davey null and void. However, later confidence in Sorell is reflected in Despatch 17 from Earl Bathurst on 24 July 1820, directing Macquarie to authorize Sorell to make grants to settlers immediately on arrival in Van Diemen's Land, and to report them regularly to the governor.[62] Apart from "illegal" grants made in Van Diemen's Land, many of which were confirmed by Macquarie when the surveys were eventually carried out, land was made available to settlers on the basis of 'tickets-of-occupation', either as a form of permissive occupancy in expectation of a grant, or simply to provide stock-grazing in lands beyond the settled areas. Deputy Surveyor-General George Evans, in his evidence to Commissioner Bigge, claimed that Sorell never refused such 'tickets' 'to settlers who wanted temporary pasture for their flocks and herds in the interior'.[63]

In the period 1818 to 1821, the following 217 grants were made:

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[58] *HRA,* Series I, Vol. VII, pp. 194, 195.
[59] *Ibid.,* p. 626.
[60] *HRA,* Series I, Vol. VII, p. 734.
[61] *HRA,* Series III, Vol. II, p. 387.
[62] *HRA,* Series I, Vol. X, p. 333. The government was obviously responding to the complaints of delay from emigrants.
[63] Ritchie, *Punishment and Profit, op. cit.,* pp. 145, 146. It is likely that Gatehouse's stocks mentioned above were on the east coast under such an arrangement.

Table 3

Year	0-99 acres	100-500 acres	>500 acres
1818	21	5	3
1819	1	2	3
1820	39	21	6
1821	58	30	28

Source: S. Morgan, *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania, Appendix 1.*[64]

The grants totalled 66,000 acres. In 1817 one hundred and eleven grants had been made totalling 17,158 acres, but it would appear that many were catch-up grants following survey and the recall of Lieutenant-Governor Davey. Of the 1817 grants, fifteen could be described as land on the fringe of settlement and of those only two exceeded 500 acres. Of the grants from 1818 to 1821, twenty-seven were within the country of the *Mairremmener,* and thirteen were grants under 500 acres on the Lake River. No grants were made in 1822, again most likely because of delays in survey. However, 1823 was an exceptionally busy year – 1027 grants were made, 287 being greater than 500 acres, and some one hundred of these being on the fringes of the settled areas. A total acreage of 441,871 was granted. Of particular note were the eight large grants made at Great Swan Port, the first on the east coast, and five large grants on the Lake River, all within *Mairremmener* country. The grants at Great Swanport were in the heart of the lands of the *Loontitetermairrelehoinner* and *Mayyerlower* bands, and this location was a gathering point for many other migratory bands given its proximity to abundant marine resources, and to Moulting Lagoon, a seasonal hunting ground for swans and their eggs. The first settlers on these grants – George and John Meredith, Adam and John Amos, John "Paddy" Harte, William Talbot, Richard Honner and Thomas Buxton – were all soon to experience degrees of confrontation and conflict with the east coast bands.

***Rise and fall: the relative populations of settlers and the* Mairremmener**

The white population of Van Diemen's Land at the 1823 muster was 10,009, including 5,590 convicts. Of that number, 2,312 free persons and convicts lived in the Port Dalrymple area, and 244 convicts were located at Macquarie Harbour. Thirty

[64] Morgan, *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania, op. cit.*, pp. 167, 168.

seven percent of the free population and ten percent of the convict population were women. The total population at the 1820 muster was 3,571; the population growth was therefore 350 percent, with a similar growth in the convict population. While the predominant growth occurred in Hobart Town and its immediate hinterland, the spread into the remote districts is indicated in the following table:

Table 4

Population in the remote districts 1823[65]

District	Men	Women	Children	Convicts	Total
Green Ponds, Bath & Methven	66	24	52	204	346
Lennox & Richmond	91	28	43	164	326
Macquarie	20	10	8	76	114
Swan Port	7	3	-	40	50
Totals	184	65	103	484	836

Source: *Historical Records of Australia,* series III, vol.IV.

If the fringes of other settled districts such as Ormagh, Staffa, Ulva, and New Norfolk were to be taken into account, the white population now within the country of the *Mairremmener* would have been over one thousand, well exceeding the Aboriginal numbers. More importantly, the lands selected by the settlers in these remote areas encroached over the migratory roads, and, as noted in previous chapters, traditional movements of the Aboriginal bands were therefore greatly circumscribed.

The population of the *Mairremmener* bands at this time is open to debate. While, as noted above, Plomley and others placed the numbers of east coast and Central Plateau Aborigines at the time of invasion at 900 to 1,000, a number of issues had intervened over the next twenty years which would have greatly affected the band numbers. There were of course some murders, but in numbers such that the population would not have been dramatically affected. Plomley also attributed a

[65] *HRA,* Series III, Vol. IV, pp.635, 636. The high convict population is explained by a condition inserted into all land grants by the Governor, Sir Thomas Brisbane in 1822; namely, that one convict labourer would be supplied at the grantee's expense for every one hundred acres granted. (*HRA,* Series III, Vol. IV, n.132, p. 885). The grants of land in the remote areas were large.

decline in numbers to sicknesses from diseases imported by the settlers.[66] Robinson, for example, recorded numerous instances of respiratory infections among the Aborigines, especially the common cold, often resulting in death. Calder also attributed respiratory infections as the major cause of population decline.[67] The extent to which these diseases affected the Aborigines is exemplified in a comment in the *Hobart Town Gazette* on 21 July 1827, reporting the death of 'Black Kit; queen of the tribe which used to have Black Tom at its head.' The editor noted that 'the catarrh which was so general throughout the island affected the aboriginal natives exactly the same way as the Europeans ... her companion, is labouring under the same distemper, which, with the addition of leprosy, will probably be the cause of her death.' Plomley claimed that the probable existence of venereal diseases among Aborigines, caused by sexual relations between stock keepers, sealers and Aboriginal women, was an important factor, resulting in sterility and therefore a lower birth rate.[68] In addition, as noted in chapter four and in this chapter below, the abduction of women by sealers contributed to a falling birth rate. The total number of abductions in the first twenty years of settlement can never be determined; however, from Robinson's records of the women recovered from sealers in the Bass Strait islands, at least ten were taken from the country of the *Mairremmener* after 1813 and before 1823. In the case of one woman – Tekartee of the *Loontemairenner* band of Little Swanport – Robinson claimed that she was abducted by sealer John Herrin when she was 'a little girl'. She was 22 years of age in 1831. This comment may well indicate that the sealers took women of a very young age.[69] Seven of the ten women were from the three bands of the Swan Port area, a factor which would have had a dramatic effect on a population of perhaps one hundred and fifty.

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[66] N. J. B. Plomley, 'Disease among the Tasmanian Aborigines', *The Medical Journal of* Australia, Vol. 151, December 4/18, 1989, pp. 666-669; Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, pp. 18, 19; *Weep in Silence*, pp. 915, 916. Plomley noted that the respiratory disease primarily responsible for many deaths was pneumonia.

[67] Calder, *Some Account of the Wars. Extirpation, Habits, &c.*, pp. 25-27.

[68] *Hobart Town Gazette,* July 1827. 'Black Kit' was probably Murrerninghe of the *Tydairerme* Band from Tasman's Peninsula, but may have been Pagerly. The diagnosis of leprosy occurs in other instances, but may have been the 'loathsome' skin disease Robinson referred to – *Weep in Silence*, p.916. There is no record of leprosy as an endemic disease among the Tasmanians.

[69] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, pp. 246, 249, 290, 291, 318, 336, 395, 737, 990, 991, 993, 995, 996, 1015; 1016; *Weep in Silence*, pp. 74, 324, 325, 328, 798, 804-833, 854, 910, 912. The women were: Dromedeenner, Loorryminer, Mirnermannerme, Pairrerteemme, Tanleboneyer, Tekartee and Tencotemanener, all from Little Swanport bands; and Maytepueminner, Pollerrelberner and Pungerneeterlattenner of St. Patrick's Head bands.

A fourth incalculable factor in population decrease was the effect of the disruption of cultural practices as the result of the occupation of Aboriginal country by the settlers. The lands occupied in the period 1813-1823 were, in the main, across the *Mairremmener* roads, particularly the road along the course of the Coal River, where numerous Aboriginal camp sites and stone quarries were located. The beginnings of settler occupation of the east coast also cut the roads from Great Oyster and Prosser Bays, along the Little Swanport and Prosser Rivers. The restriction of movement was a devastating blow to the Aborigines' nomadic culture: not only were hunting grounds lost, but the cultural landscape vital to their spiritual and economic life was disturbed.

Finally on the question of population, the numbers at the time of invasion have always been a matter of contention, with estimates of the total Tasmanian population ranging from 2,000 to in excess of 8,000. A factor not taken into account in many estimates was the effect of nomadic movements. Bands appearing on the east coast at one time of the year were often the same bands appearing later on the Central Plateau. As the settlers had no way of identifying the personnel of the bands, other than the occasional recognition of a few individuals, it was inevitable that double-counting of numbers took place, a factor noted by Jorgenson when he pointed to the rapid movements of bands during the Black War.[70] Jorgenson claimed that by 1830 the numbers within the major socio-linguistic groups, including the *Mairremmener*, amounted to 450. If that estimate approached the truth, the numbers within the *Mairremmener* bands must have been somewhat less that 300 and amalgamations of bands would have taken place. By 1823, the numbers must have been substantially less than the estimated population in 1803. In the following years, with the rush of immigrants the numbers dwindled significantly, and Jorgenson's estimate may have been close to the mark.

An Antipodean scramble: immigration to Van Diemen's Land

One result of Macquarie's promotion of immigration and the adoption of the recommendations of the Bigge Report on that issue was the production of a number of "histories" of Van Diemen's Land, extolling the virtues of the colony to potential

[70] Plomley, *Joregen Jorgenson and the Aborigines*, p.p. 69, 70.

emigrants. The forerunner of numerous publications, preceding Bigge, was a publication by the native-born settler William Charles Wentworth, whose *Statistical, Historical, and Political Description of the Colony of New South Wales and its Independent Settlements in Van Diemen's Land* was published in 1819. While the publication also preceded the inspection of Van Diemen's Land carried out by Macquarie in 1821, it is likely that Wentworth was seeking to support the governor's intention of promoting immigration to New Holland. Wentworth was effusive in his praise of the potential for agriculture in Van Diemen's Land, and, while expressing caution over the activities of the bushrangers, downplayed the threat from the Aborigines, claiming that 'Two persons armed with muskets may traverse the island from one end to the other in the most perfect safety.'[71] The book was a success, running to three editions, and Wentworth was soon joined by other boosters with varying degrees of self-interest in promoting the colony. In 1821, while serving as the Deputy-Surveyor-General in charge of the Land Survey Department in Hobart Town, George Evans published the work *A Geographical, Historical, and Topographical Description of Van Diemen's Land.* The book's *Appendix* was addressed to 'Emigration to Van Diemen's Land'; however, the work was, in part, a riposte to an earlier "history" published by Lieutenant Charles Jeffreys of the Royal Navy, who had commanded the Colonial Brig HMS *Kangaroo* in transporting convicts between the New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land settlements. In May 1820, Jeffreys published a book entitled *Geographical and Descriptive Delineations of the Island of Van Diemen's Land*, again a work directed at prospective emigrants. Von Steiglitz noted that Jeffreys had obtained a copy of Evans' manuscript before it was published, probably when Evans was a passenger on HMS *Kangaroo.* In his book, Jeffreys also downplayed any concern at the threat from the Aborigines, claiming that they 'certainly do not appear to be sufficiently numerous to be formidable to the Europeans, but have seldom since ventured to come near the settlements'.[72]

Other boosters included William Kingdom, publisher of *An Abstract of all the most useful information relative to The United States of America, and the British Colonies of Canada, The Cape of Good Hope, New South Wales, and Van Diemen's Land* (1822); Thomas Godwin, *Emigrants Guide to Van Diemen's Land, etc.* (1823),

[71] Wentworth, *Statistical Account of the Colony of New South Wales,* p. 117.
[72] Evans, *Geographical, Historical, and Topographical Description of Van Diemen's Land,* pp.1, 15.

a compendium of the works of Wentworth, Jeffries, Evans and Kingdom; and, outside the period under review, but influential in its circulation and commentary on farming practices, Henry Widowson's *Present State of Van Diemen's Land: Comprising and Account of its Agricultural Capabilities, with Observations on the Present State of Farming*, published in 1829.[73]

The resulting rush of immigrants was not without its problems. Macquarie, in a despatch of 28 November 1821 to Earl Bathurst prior to his recall, noted that 'at least One Half of the Free Settlers ... only bring out fictitious Capitals ... bringing Goods *on Credit* ... and have generally received Lands in proportion to the amount of the Goods they import into the Colony ... In Van Diemen's Land, in particular, many Cases of this fraudulent Nature occurred when I was myself there in May and June last'. Macquarie instituted a system of declaration by affidavit of the true capital brought by immigrants. He also instituted a new scale of 'Lands and Indulgences to be allowed to New Settlers' which provided for the grant of one hundred acres and one convict servant for a immigrant with a verified capital of £100, to a maximum of two thousand acres and six convict servants for an immigrant with £3,000 and upwards.[74] As there was no specific requirement for fencing or other forms of enclosure in the deeds of grant, the control of stock on the grants was the responsibility of convict shepherds, the larger grants requiring more convicts. John West claimed that in 1820, only the properties of Edward Lord and the former lieutenant-governor, Thomas Davey, were fenced.[75] In the event, Macquarie's

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[73] William Kingdom, *America and the British Colonies: an Abstract of all the Most Useful Information Relative to the United States of America and the British Colonies of Canada, the Cape of Good Hope, New South Wales, and Van Diemen's Land: Exhibiting at the One View the Comparative Advantages Each Country Offers for Emigration: Collected From the Most Valuable and Recent Publications, to Which are Added a Few Notes and Observations*, London: G & W. B. Whittaker, 1820; Thomas Godwin, *Godwin's Emigrants Guide to Van Diemen's Land, More Properly Called Tasmania: Containing a Description of its Climate, Soil and Productions; a Form of Application for Free Grants of Land ... and other Information*, London: Sherwood, Jones & Co, 1823; Henry Widowson, *The Present State of Van Diemen's Land: Comprising an Account of its Agricultural Capabilities, with Observations on the Present State of Farming, &c, &c, Pursued in that Colony: and Other Important Matters Connected with Emigration*, London, S. Robinson, 1829.

[74] *HRA*, Series I, Vol. X, pp. 568- 572. The affidavit system was subsequently disapproved by the Colonial Office (*HRA*, Series III, Vol. IV, p. 69. This despatch indicates the problems arising from Macquarie's directions).

[75] West, *The History of Tasmania*, p. 59. These properties were on the Clarence Plains, proximate to Hobart Town. Lord was also grazing cattle on the Bark Hut Plains outside the settled districts at this time.

changes to the land grants system were ineffective, and his successor found it necessary to institute more comprehensive controls.

The inrush of immigrants necessitated the opening of new lands. Sorell had noted with some concern that 'several Settlers arriving at short intervals from each other have given Notice to settle on the same Tract.' He denied the right of a claim by a settler by the mere 'placing a Hut upon a particular Spot in a large Tract of Country upon an Authority to occupy land of a general tenor, which contained no description or Specification of limit'.[76] Without comprehensive regulations (as were to be promulgated by Governor Brisbane in 1825), the opening of new lands would assist in alleviating the problem, and Sorell, as noted above, had undertaken a personal exploration of the Clyde and Shannon Rivers district in December 1820. He was enthusiastic as to the potential of the area for grazing, and reported that John Beamont, the provost-marshal, had 'lived a considerable time in the Country'.[77] Earlier, in December 1819, Sorell had sent Henry Rice and a party to explore the east coast, from the Coal River north to St.Patrick's Head, then through the Break O'Day and St. Paul's Plains and the South Esk River valley to Launceston.[78] Rice's favourable report of the lands explored was instrumental in encouraging settlers such as Meredith and his party to select land in the Swan Port region, the country of the *Mairremmener* bands. With the beginnings of the occupation of the east coast, the death knell of *Mairremmener* society had been sounded.

Dispossession and conflict: increasing attacks on the settlers

The movement of settlers onto the east coast also saw the revival of attacks by Aborigines on the settlers. A particular incident where Aborigines were accused of murders and bushranging occurred in March 1823, when a band of 'about 65', reportedly led by the Sydney Aborigine 'Musquito' (*Yerrangoulaga*), a Norfolk Island evacuee, attacked a stock-keepers' hut at Grindstone Bay. Musquito had acted

[76] *HRA,* Series III, Vol. IV, p. 54. The comments appear in a despatch of 25 May 1822 to Colonial Secretary Goulburn, relating to the dispute between George Meredith and William Talbot over the claims for the same land at Swan Port.
[77] *HRA,* Series III, Vol. IV, p. 643. Beamont had explored the Shannon River district in December 1817, and probably selected land for grazing soon after. (*HRA* Series III, Vol. III, pp.586, 587). He lived in Hobart Town, where he was required to perform his duties as provost-marshal. The Shannon stock run was likely supervised by convict shepherds.
[78] pp. 645-648.

as a tracker during the search for the bushranger Michael Howe. Melville claimed he was also employed as a stock keeper, but insulted by the prison population and 'jeered ... for the services he had rendered the Colony ... he took to the bush, and became a chief of a tribe he formed himself, and which consisted of the worst description of the aborigines.'[79] This claim is supported by Bonwick, quoting the Reverend Mr. Horton, who claimed the 'so-called *Tame Mob* ... consisted of persons (twenty or thirty of both sexes) who had absconded from their proper tribes in the interior'.[80] Apart from the discrepancy in the numbers of Musquito's 'tribe', Bonwick suggested that 'Black Tom' (Tom Birch, Kickerterpoller, mentioned above) had joined it in 1822, and was 'an active accomplice'. If so, the Aborigines supposedly led by Musquito were probably all *Mairremmener* from the Oyster Bay bands. The estimate of sixty-five appears exaggerated, whereas twenty or thirty would have represented one band, a more likely circumstance. The assumption that the band was a 'tame mob' frequenting Hobart Town environs appeared to rely on Horton's testimony alone. The other named participant with Musquito was 'Black Jack', who Gilbert Robertson claimed was the brother of 'Dick' (Cranky Dick, Druerertattenanne), and was 'of the ... Oyster Bay tribe'.[81] Musquito was also reputed to be accompanied by three women, one being 'Gooseberry' (Rose, Whytyyhecappeerner), of the *Poredarererme* Band of Oyster Bay.[82]

On 15 November 1823, a band of Aborigines led by Musquito, and including Black Jack and probably Black Tom, attacked Silas Gatehouse's stock-keepers hut at Grindstone Bay. The hut was occupied by John Radford and a Polynesian – Mammoa – Gatehouse's convict servants. Another man – William Hollyoak – was also present. He was a convict servant of George Meredith, and had stopped at the hut on a return from a stay at the Hobart Town hospital. Prior to the attack the Aborigines had appeared friendly, but having connived to steal the stock-keepers guns, they chased the men as they fled from the hut, spearing them all; however, Radford, although

[79] Melville, *The History of the Island of Van Diemen's Land,* p. 25. The account of number in the band was taken from the evidence of John Radford, a convict stock keeper for Silas Gatehouse on his Grindstone Bay 'run', during the trial of Musquito, discussed under. Windschuttle noted that Musquito worked as a stock keeper for Edward Lord. Windschuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History,* p. 66.
[80] Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians,* p. 93.
[81] Gilbert Robertson's testimony to the Aborigines' Committee, 3 March 1830, *Copies of all Correspondence, op. cit.,* pp. 47, 48.
[82] Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines,* p. 74.

severely injured, managed to escape. Spending ten days in the bush, he returned to the hut to find the body of Hollyoak in a decayed state. The body of Mammoa was recovered by a search party, partly submerged in a creek. At their trial for murder in the Supreme Court on 1 December 1824, Radford testified that both Musquito and Black Jack had spoken English to him. He claimed that the attack was unprovoked, and no attempt had been made by the stock-keepers to interfere with the Aboriginal women with Musquito's band. The Aborigines had taken the stock keepers' dogs.[83] Musquito was found guilty and hanged. Black Jack was acquitted of both murders, but later hanged for another murder, as noted below.[84] The assumption that the band to which Musquito attached himself was his 'tribe' and he was the 'chief' appears unsubstantiated. Musquito did however participate in a number of attacks on settlers throughout 1824 before he was captured. The evidence at Musquito's trial revealed a number of known members of the *Poredarererme* band, and their previous attacks on stock-keepers and stock in the Oyster Bay area are recorded above. A better explanation of the attack was that the band was carrying out the established practice of attempting to expel the alien beings from their country, just as they continued to do over the next few years.

During the remaining months of Sorell's term as lieutenant-governor, further murders of settlers occurred in *Mairremmener* country. Melville noted that Black Jack was charged, convicted and hanged for the murder of Patrick Macarthy, 'a stock-keeper at Sorell Plains ... a month or two' after his Grindstone Bay acquittal.[85] On 26 March 1824, James Doyle, stock-keeper for Mrs Collins at Blue Hills near Lake Tiberias, was speared to death and his hut burned. The murder was attributed to

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[83] Supreme Court of van Diemen's Land: testimony of John Radford, trial of Musquito, I December 1824, before Pedder, C.J. http://www.law.mq.edu.au/sctas/html/r_v_musquito, accessed 8 February 2007; Melville, *The History of Van Diemen's Land,* pp.31-35. 'Mammoa' was 'a native of Otaheite'. Radford, in his testimony, claimed that Musquito was armed with a waddy and 'a stick shaped like the axe of a tomahawk'. West noted that Musquito was seen by Gilbert Robertson 'to cut off the head of a pigeon with a stick, while flying'. West, *The History of Tasmania,* p. 267. Both these references have been taken to mean that Musquito was armed with a boomerang, a weapon not used by or known to the Tasmanians.

[84] Black Jack was hanged in 1824 for the murder of Patrick Macarthy at Sorell Plains. Melville, *History of Van Diemen's Land,* pp. 34, 35. In 1872, James Erskine Calder was in possession of a death mask of Black Jack, reported in *The Mercury,* 14 April 1872. The cast of Black Jack was made by Dr. James Scott, colonial surgeon.

[85] Plomley appears to date the event prior to March 1824.

Musquito, Black Jack, and others.[86] In his book, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, Keith Windschuttle continually referred to Musquito and the members of what was probably the *Poredarererme* band as 'the tame mob', 'the gang' or 'outlaws'[87], and yet the records of the attacks rarely mention robbery. Stock keepers were killed, weapons were taken, and huts were burned, actions consistent with the motive of expulsion, as stated above. The opportunity to obtain desirable goods such as blankets, tea, sugar and flour was most likely not overlooked, actions properly described as "plunder" during the future Black War.

A baton change: Sorell is recalled

In 1823, Van Diemen's Land was again in turmoil. Sorell's domestic situation was well-known within the small community at Hobart Town, and that knowledge 'had produced no decrease in the number of visitors to Government House'. The comment clearly implied that Sorell's domestic arrangement was tolerated, if not accepted and approved' by the settlers.[88] Notwithstanding that toleration, in his confidential report Commissioner Bigge had recommended the recall of Sorell on the grounds that his adultery was a bad image and example for the free settlers in the colony, even though the administration was sound and well-managed. Notice of the recall became widely known in October 1823, when a public meeting was held to raise a petition to the King 'praising Sorell's term of office, deploring his recall, and appealing for his continuation in office.'[89] Anthony Fenn Kemp, the author of the original complaints to Lord Bathurst, Governor Macquarie and others of Sorell's adultery, now supported the lieutenant-governor and moved the resolution of support at the public meeting. Kemp's motives, given his previous bitter relationship with Sorell, were expressed in terms of his respect for Sorell's protection of 'our Personal

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[86] Plomley, *The Aboriginal/Settler Clash,* p. 58. In evidence to the Aborigines Committee on 9 March 1830, James Hobbs claimed that Doyle was his convict servant. *Copies of All Correspondence,* p. 50. On 6 August 1824, the *Hobart Town Gazette* reported that two stock keepers from James Hobbs' property at the Eastern Marshes claimed 'a tribe of no less than two hundred Natives' killed a fellow stock keeper, James Doyle, and forced them to retreat and leave him and 'the cattle and premises at the mercy of the tribe'. Apart from the probable exaggeration of the number of Aborigines, there appears to be confusion as to when Doyle was killed, *vide* the previous report in the *Hobart Town Gazette* on 26 March 1824. There was only one convict named James Doyle in Van Diemen's Land in 1824, *per* ship *Castle Forbes,* 4 March 1820.

[87] Windschuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History,* pp. 67-69.

[88] Mickleborough, *William Sorell,* p. 105.

[89] p. 107.

rights and the General Security of Property'; in other words, Kemp's self-interest.[90] The appeals were to no avail, and Sorell welcomed his successor, Colonel George Arthur, to Hobart Town on 12 May 1824. Following a banquet held in his honour and an excess of well-wishes and congratulations on his role as the colony's administrator, Sorell sailed on 13 June 1824 with Mrs Kent and their children for England. He was not done with Van Diemen's Land completely: he remained the owner of 'as much as 12, 710 acres of land in the colony', and he submitted reports to Lord Bathurst and to Arthur, commenting on the state of the colony and making recommendations for improvements to the administration.[91] In his report to Earl Bathurst, Sorell claimed that 'the Colony of Van Diemen's Land has passed into the charge of my successor, in perfect order and tranquillity; loyal and grateful to His Majesty's Government; free from faction'. He pointed to the growth and progress, with the settler population swelling from two thousand to eleven thousand. The letter was obviously written as a self-testimonial, Sorell seeking further employment with the Colonial Office and some further recompense in pension or land grants for his service. The report made no mention of the rising numbers of clashes between Aborigines and settlers as the result of the rapid increase in immigration and the encroachment into the country of the *Mairremmener* through the Midlands and the East Coast.

In the lengthy report to Arthur, Sorell was less enthusiastic about the colony's progress and prospects, complaining of the rapidity of change and of the government's requirement to reduce expenditures in the colony, a stricture which he hoped 'was not intended ... to abrogate the support and encouragement of the Mother Country, without which, for a time at least, these young, remote, and peculiar colonies must fail to realize the object of their original Establishment and present expectations.'[92] In this thoughtful report Sorell made useful suggestions on the levying of duties and other forms of revenue, on the education system, on the provision for religious observance and ministers, on the police and magistrates, and at length on the management of the convict system. He also referred to the need for new public buildings in Hobart Town and Launceston, of the need for a road to the east coast at Swan Port, and on the Macquarie Harbour settlement. He touched upon the

[90] Mickleborough, p. 108., and p. 100 for details of departure.
[91] p. 111; *HRA*, Series III, Vol. IV, pp. 134-154, 563-568, 576,577.
[92] *HRA* Series III, Vol. IV, p. 139.

issue of exploration, and the need to continue the work, particularly on the west coast. However, as in the report to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, no mention was made of the Aborigines or of the growing incidence of clashes between the *Mairremmener* bands and the settlers. Sorell would have been well aware that Arthur's instructions carried directions on relations with the Aborigines similar to those he had received; that is, the conciliation of their friendship and goodwill, the enjoining of settlers to live in amity and kindness with them, and the punishment of all acts of violence against them. The failure to discuss the issues arising from the clashes, all of which had received considerable attention in the *Hobart Town Gazette*, is mystifying. Sorell's general order of 27 March 1819 relating to the need for forbearance and conciliation and prohibiting the stealing of Aboriginal children had shown his understanding of the problems that had arisen, and which would increase as the result of the dispossession and occupation of Aboriginal country. In particular, he noted that he was 'aware that many of the Settlers and Stock-keepers consider the Natives as Hostile People, seeking, without Provocation to destroy them and their Stock; and towards whom any attempts at Forbearance or Conciliation would be useless.'[93] That understanding should have, at the very least, brought forward an acknowledgement of the failure to educate the settlers in the error of their ways, together with recommendations on the means of reconciliation with the Aborigines. The neglect to do so again reflects the actions of all the previous administrators in the colony; that is, while clashes were relatively few, the less seen of or done to the Aborigines was the best course of action. The more invisible they were the better for the peace and harmony of the colony.

A new colony, a new governor: the end of inept administration

The elders of the *Mairremmener* bands – the men who Robinson called the 'chiefs' – had overseen twenty years of abuse of their country and their People. Men such as Korebenerlityuer of the *Lunetinemairrener* band at Little Swanport; Larkumpinerungerner of the *Mayyerlower* on Shouten Island; Pootappelureyanner of the *Laremairremener* of Prosser's Bay; Poetigwerlayde of the *Pyedarereme* at Eaglehawk Neck; and especially Tooyernammelargenner of the *Moomairremener* at Pitt Water, the man who may have seen it all begin, remained helpless in the face of a

[93] *Hobart Town Gazette,* 27 March 1819.

growing tide of white men sweeping across the land.[94] All the appointees to the position of lieutenant-governor of the two colonies in Van Diemen's Land to 1824 had failed to do any thing but pay lip service to the instructions of the British Government and the Colonial Office with regard to the treatment of the Aborigines. Those failures must have sat uncomfortably with the politicians and bureaucrats in the seat of power. The government of the day was greatly influenced by the moral doctrines of the Evangelical Revival, and particularly by the activities of William Wilberforce, Henry Thornton and others in the attempts to abolish slavery and the slave trade. The Clapham Sect, an evangelical group associated with the Church of England, generated significant influence on the government. Its members included Thornton, then a member of Parliament, and other prominent members of society. The Sect aimed to promote religion to the 'savages' in the colonies by supporting bible societies and missions to indigenous peoples, and especially by supporting the activities of the Church Missionary Society. The opinions of the evangelicals have been noted in chapter four in reference to the proposals to settle New Holland, and are also reflected in a letter published in the *Hobart Town Gazette* on 23 July 1824, when '"Zeno", a constant subscriber', made a 'few suggestions on the subject of civilizing those poor creatures'. Zeno had concluded that the unnecessary slaughter of native game and the expelling of the Aborigines from their country, together with 'unprovoked aggressions' would result in 'desperation, degeneracy, or recriminative robbery'. He recommended the

> serving out by public subscription, with the humane concurrence of Government, bread and meat in adequate quantities to maintain the existence of those who, *because black*, have for our sakes been bereaved of their original possession, and goaded by attendant hunger to acts of sanguinary retaliation .. and by [distributing food] we should acquire their goodwill, through which an opening would be speedily given for the introduction of that knowledge which not only regards temporalities, but also "maketh wise unto salvation"[95]

"Zeno' described himself as an 'old settler'. His letter not only carried the undertones of evangelicalism, but displayed an understanding, in the context of the times, of the results of colonization and dispossession. While it was certainly an attitude shared by a number of others, his letter drew no immediate response in the public arena.

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[94] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, pp. 310, 312; *Weep in Silence*, pp. 802, 821, 822, 829.
[95] "Zeno", letter to the Editor, *Hobart Town Gazette*, 23 July 1824. The pseudonym has not been traced. Author's emphasis.

The administrations of Thomas Davey and William Sorell had overseen the expansion of Van Diemen's Land, mostly in an inept, haphazard manner. The two men had had little previous administrative experience other than their military service, and none at all in the administration of the services required by a new and developing colony. Land grants had been handed out often recklessly, sometimes illegally, and always thoughtlessly with regard to the Indigenous inhabitants. Exploration of the island was carried out by default, usually only when lands available for parcelling out were exhausted. An incompetent Survey Department had allowed the measuring of land grants to fall into neglect, and the occupation of lands had been allowed to occur without any official sanction or supervision. All these factors impinged heavily upon the Aborigines, and particularly the *Mairremmener* People, whose country contained the prime lands desired by the settlers for grazing. Aside from the dispossession of their country, the Aborigines were ignored, their presence viewed as either a nuisance or a threat, and their very being considered of no account. All the proclamations and general orders directed towards their welfare were mere words without practical effect, and, in any event, meant nothing to peoples with whom little or no communication existed, as the colonizers had not seen any value in gaining knowledge of any Aboriginal language. Wiser heads and hands were needed, and the British government turned to an individual whose background included participation in the evangelical movement. A man with proven colonial experience and administrative ability, he was about to descend upon the inhabitants of Van Diemen's Land with plans for all – old and new, black and white, free and chained alike.

Chapter Six

Chasing shadows: the Black War

It has been said, that in these cases the natives became extinct rather than that they were exterminated; but it must be a voluntary self-delusion which can make us contented with this mode of stating the case. A numerous population cannot be cut off from the soil upon which their forefathers lived and multiplied, and upon which an exotic race of recent introduction now proves remarkably prolific, without the operation of some great and highly pernicious influence.

The Meeting for Sufferings, Society of Friends, 1838.[1]

Good men, good intentions: a new beginning in a new colony.

On 26 March 1824, James Doyle was killed by Aborigines, and his hut was burned. Doyle was stock keeper for Mrs Collins, whose property was situated on the Hobart Town to Launceston Road near the Swan Inn, north of Bagdad. It was the first clash in what proved to be a bloody year.[2] The property was within the district of Green Ponds, where twenty-seven land grants had been made in 1823, eight in excess of five hundred acres. A further one hundred and four grants had been made in the adjoining districts of Bath, Ormaig and Methven.[3] Most grants were astride the Hobart Town-Launceston road: some were contiguous with the Little Swanport River, the route of the Aboriginal road referred to in chapter two. The location was the point of convergence in the Midlands of the three Aboriginal roads which followed the river valleys from the east coast. The first report of Doyle's murder in the *Hobart Town Gazette* was brief; a second report on 6 August 1824 expounded at length on the 'mischievous disposition which [the Aborigines] have lately shown towards us ... chiefly to be ascribed to the unprovoked aggressions ... perpetrated upon them by stock keepers and others'. The editorial noted that the attacks had demonstrated knowledge 'gained from Musquito', and that the Aborigines 'have never been known to show their revenge until within these last few months.'[4]

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[1] *Information Respecting the Aborigines in the British Colonies, Circulated by the Direction of the Meeting for Sufferings. Being Principally Extracts from the Report Presented to the House of Commons, by the Select Committee Appointed on that Subject*, London: Darton & Harvey, 1838.

[2] Plomley, *Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, p. 58; *Hobart Town Gazette*, 26 March 1824; Frankland, *Map of Van Diemen's Land 1835*.

[3] Morgan, *Land Settlement in Early Tasmania*, p. 169.

[4] The second report of James Doyle's murder in the *Gazette* on 6 August 1824 is in error as to the date, as only one convict named James Doyle arrived in 1820 *per* ship *Castle Forbes*. Musquito (Yerrangoulaga) was the Port Jackson Aborigine transported to Van Diemen's Land for murder. Employed as a tracker by the government, he became upset at the treatment levelled at him by whites, and joined *Mairremmener* bands in the bush.

Most of the clashes that followed during 1824 took place in the same vicinity. A murder that particularly aroused outrage was that of Matthew Osborne, a settler near Jericho, and the wounding of his wife, on 10 June 1824. The report in the *Gazette* described the events at length. A party of Aborigines was taken to the Osborne's property by the assigned servant of another settler named 'Beagent'. It was claimed they were led by 'Black Tom' (Kickerterpoller), who spoke to the Osborne's in English, demanding food. However, after being fed the Aborigines managed to disarm Matthew Osborne and speared him to death. They then beat his wife Mary senseless and plundered the hut. Mary Osborne survived by struggling to the hut of settler John Jones, three miles away. The editor of the *Gazette* repeated his opinion that the cause of the clashes was provocation by the settlers, together with their 'corruption' by Musquito. He also noted that 'Black Tom' had been raised in the Birch's household in Hobart Town, where he became 'addicted to rum and tobacco', the supposed purpose of his plundering Osborne's hut. Several issues were raised by the newspaper report. The 'assigned servant' was portrayed as demonstrating sympathy for and assistance to the Aborigines in the affray. This claim of convicts often assisting Aborigines in raids was repeated in later clashes.[5] Black Tom, as leader, was depicted as dissolute, a claim disproved by the qualities of leadership he demonstrated then and in future years. Musquito, even though not present, was by implication blamed for the affray. The indeterminate claim of 'provocation' by the settlers thus appears a clumsy attempt at even-handedness: the corrupted Aborigines and the complicit convict on the one hand, and the 'depraved' stock keepers acting violently, perhaps with settler consent, on the other.[6]

In the following months, five stock keepers were killed and others wounded or harassed by Aborigines at locations along the route of the Aboriginal roads from the east coast to the Central Plateau: at Murderer's Plains, the Big River, the Clyde River and Lake Sorell in June 1824; at Swanport in July; and at York Plains in August and

[5] These reports were 'completely falsified' by the absence of any such runaways when the last remnant of the *Mairremmener* People were captured by Robinson on 31 December 1831 – *Hobart Town Courier*, 14 January 1832.

[6] Editorial, *Hobart Town Gazette*, 10 July 1824. Musquito and Black Jack were blamed for attacks even when the were apparently not present; *vide* report in the *Hobart Town Gazette* of 9 April 1824, of the killing of James Taylor, convict servant of John Cassidy, at Old Beach. The report stated that 'It does not appear that Musquito or Black Jack were seen ... though there is reason to believe they must have been near the spot'.

October. In the latter case, the farm of James Hobbs was attacked three times, his hut plundered, cattle driven off and potatoes dug up and removed. At Lake Sorell, the stock keeper's hut was burned. Sheep were driven into the river during an attack on Dr Pearson's property on the Elizabeth River in April 1825. Musquito was claimed to have led four of the attacks, but was captured in August 1824 by the Aborigine Tegg.[7] The clashes were not only becoming more frequent: a pattern had been established which was to be followed in the escalating conflict between the adversaries. Aside from the murders, the plundering and burning of huts and driving of stock were to be the hallmarks of the hit and run tactics leading up to the war soon to be seen as taking place, tactics which mirrored the earlier attempts to drive alien "beings" out of *Mairremmener* country. The attackers were *Mairremmener* bands; the presence of Kickerterpoller, an elder and leader of the *Poredarereme* band of Great Oyster Bay was evidence of that, but the bands may well have included warriors from the Midlands or even the Central Plateau, especially when attacks took place in the winter months. The *Hobart Town Gazette* report of 6 August 1824, noted above, claimed:

> We are credibly informed, that no Natives are now to be observed on any part of the coast, which is in some measure accounted for by the great number seen in the Interior, where it is apprehended the Aborigines in general have lately formed themselves into one formidable body.

This observation is indicative of three factors. Firstly, that the settler occupation of the country around Waterloo Point, Little Swanport and Prosser's Bay (that is, the country of many *Mairremmener* bands) had increased to the point where the numbers of settlers made a continued Aboriginal presence hazardous. Secondly, even allowing for exaggeration, the numbers of warriors involved in raiding parties vastly exceeded the numbers normally contained in any one band.[8] This suggested very clearly that some form of political organisation existed among bands for the purpose of a concerted campaign to expel the invaders. Finally, it served to confirm that the *Mairremmener* population was diminishing, and the amalgamation of bands was a means of survival in an increasingly hostile environment.

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[7] Plomley, *Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, pp.58, 59.

[8] For example, in the *Gazette* report of 6 August, noted above, it was claimed that 'a tribe of no less than two hundred Natives had made their appearance there'.

An experienced and competent hand: the appointment of a new viceroy

In contrast to the previous governors, the fourth viceroy, Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur, was a colonial administrator with a sound reputation. He arrived in Van Diemen's Land in May 1824. He was an experienced military officer, having seen extensive active duty in the Napoleonic Wars. His first colonial appointment was superintendent of the settlement of Belize (Honduras) in Central America, where he demonstrated

> an almost incredible energy, strong imperial sentiments, a passion for 'approbation' of his work from his superiors, a desire for the financial rewards which he was convinced he needed for the sake of his family, a strong dislike of opposition, particularly if it seemed tinged with any radical political ideas ... and an undoubted humanitarianism based on a deeply felt devotion to his Calvinist brand of Christianity.[9]

These characteristics at times resulted in conflict with the Belize settlers; however, Arthur continued to retain the support of the Government, as indicated by his promotion to the governorship of Van Diemen's Land. His humanitarianism, arising both from his evangelical beliefs and an association with William Wilberforce's anti-slavery movement, became evident in the Belize settlement when, soon after his arrival, he unsuccessfully attempted to prevent the landing of fourteen slaves from Jamaica. He also demonstrated a concern for the indigenous population, referring to 'the over-ruling necessity of doing Justice to the injured and degraded Indians.'[10]

Arthur's personal traits – hard work, commitment to the colonial system, aversion to opposition and criticism, and dedicated humanitarianism, all tinged with a measure of self-interest – were carried with him to his new post, and were soon to become evident in his administration. He quickly appraised the situation in the colony, his apprehension at the blatantly flouting of the British Government's instructions regarding the Aborigines reflected in a proclamation of 23 June 1824. The proclamation mirrored Arthur's instructions from the Colonial Office; that is, to 'support and encourage all measures which may tend to conciliate and *civilize* the Natives of this Island' and to punish any persons 'firing at, killing, or committing any outrage or aggression on the Native People.' Arthur particularly warned stock keepers to 'exercise the utmost forbearance towards the Aborigines, treating them with the

[9] Shaw, *Sir George Arthur,* p.60.
[10] p.54; also Ely, 'Pains and penalties', p. 81.

utmost kindness and compassion.'[11] However, the pressures on Arthur's administration were manifold. The transportation system had been haphazardly managed by his predecessors; records were incomplete, and issues that went to Arthur's moral concerns such as convict discipline, reformation and the provision of 'Christian guidance' for his wayward charges were deficient or nonexistent.[12] While he wished to encourage transportation as a means of rapidly developing the colony, he was faced simultaneously with a swelling number of immigrants seeking land. A less-than-competent Land Survey Department, understaffed and with a massive backlog of survey work, made the task of providing suitable land to settlers and emancipated convicts a difficult task. Although the epidemic of bushranging had to a degree been curtailed, Arthur was now also faced with the growing clashes between the Aborigines and the settlers, caused by the *raison d'être* of colonization, the sequestration of Aboriginal lands. Given the able colonial administrator that he was, Arthur moved swiftly to put the convict records and the prison and assignment system in order, and to tighten the procedures and discipline in the prisons, particularly at the Macquarie Harbour establishment and at the new station on Maria Island. Henry Melville, a severe critic of all of Arthur's administration, conceded that the Lieutenant-Governor's orders on these issues 'had the most salutary effect'.[13] The question of allocation and survey of land grants presented 'his greatest difficulty'. He was faced with poorly-done surveys, too often 'inaccurate, generous or corrupt', which resulted in conflicting claims and continuous complaints.[14] Arthur sought and obtained the retirement of the surveyor-general George Evans, and eventually replaced him with George Frankland, a competent surveyor and administrator. The Land Survey Department was bolstered with the appointment of the assistant surveyors John Helder Wedge and William Sharland, both of whom were to give long and distinguished service to the colony.[15] Over the next few years, surveys and the exploration of new lands were carried out accurately and efficiently, leases were

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[11] p.23. Proclamation by Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur, 23 June 1824. My emphasis: 'civilize' is an addition to the original instructions, supporting Arthur's humanitarian view of the missionary role of the colonizers.

[12] Richard Ely noted that 'Like most Clapham "saints" [Arthur] was thoroughly erastian ... maintaining that *he* was pastor-in-chief as well as commander-in-chief of the colony.' Ely, 'Pains and Penalties', p. 82.

[13] Shaw, *Sir George Arthur*, pp.73-74; Melville, *The History of the Island of Van Diemen's Land*, p.22.

[14] Shaw, pp. 101, 102.

[15] G. H. Stancombe, 'The early surveyors of Tasmania', *Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, Vol. 9, No. 1, February 1961, pp. 10, 11.

regularised, and new land regulations were instituted. All these measures reflected Arthur's abilities as a meticulous colonial administrator.

Beyond wit and ability: the problem of the Aborigines

Among the welter of difficulties faced by the Lieutenant-Governor, the most intractable was the fulfilment of his instructions in relation to the Aborigines. The tension that arose between his role as the dispossessor of Aboriginal country and his humanitarianism appeared in a despatch to Lord Goderich, Secretary of State for the Colonies, in April 1833. Arthur noted that:

> Undoubtedly, the [sic] being reduced to the necessity of driving *a simple but warlike and, as* IT NOW APPEARS, NOBLE MINDED RACE, from their native hunting grounds, is a measure in itself so distressing, that I am willing to make almost any prudent sacrifice that may tend to compensate for the injuries that government is unwillingly and unavoidably the instrument of inflicting.[16]

While these sentiments were expressed well after the events surrounding the Black War and the exiling of most of the Tasmanians to Flinders Island, and they may have been a form of exculpation for the effects of the policies adopted, there lay within the realization that colonization as a process was cruel and inhumane. The 'simple but warlike race' which was being deprived of its country and social structure were in fact a group of successful societies in their own right. As such, they should have received the protection of the Empire, a view often expressed by the British government itself. This view was most notably expressed by Sir George Murray in a despatch to Arthur in 1830, when he stated

> it is impossible to contemplate [the extinction of the Aboriginal population as] the result of our occupation of the island as one very difficult to be reconciled with humanity, or even with principles of justice and sound policy, and the adoption of any line of conduct having for its avowed or secret object the extinction of the native race could not fail to leave an indelible stain upon the British Government.[17]

The comment mirrored precisely the tension between colonial dispossession and humanitarian objectives experienced by Arthur. His solutions, instigated with the best of motives, were, in the end, signal failures. The first and least successful solution was Arthur's belief that the means of civilizing the Aborigines lay in the 'inculcation of the first principles of the religion ... the most effectual mode of introducing

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[16] West, *The History of Tasmania*, quoting Arthur in a letter to Lord Goderich of 6 April 1833. The italics and capitals are West's.

[17] A. G. L. Shaw, 'The influence of Lieutenant-Governor Arthur on Van Diemen's Land', *Push from the Bush*, Vol. 4, 1979, p. 91, quoting Sir George Murray, Secretary of State for the Colonies.

civilization'.[18] His application in 1828 to the Church Missionary Society for a missionary to work among the Tasmanians was rejected.[19] While some later attempts were made to translate the Bible into at least one Aboriginal language, the failure of religious instruction as a civilizing tool was a part of the substantial failure of the colonial administration to promote knowledge of the Tasmanian languages, and the gaining of an understanding of Aboriginal culture. Whether or not Christianity as a tool of "civilizing" well-developed and harmonious societies was of any value, it was the profound failure to understand Aboriginal culture that was the prime cause of the ensuing catastrophe.

Each of the other solutions considered or implemented by Arthur were to prove equal failures, a fact reflected in a despatch by him to Thomas Spring-Rice, Secretary of State for the Colonies, on 27 January 1835. He claimed that 'It was a great oversight, that a treaty was not made with the natives; *that feeling of injustice, which I am persuaded they have always entertained*, would have no existence.'[20] Other attempted solutions included the consideration of a suggestion made by Jorgen Jorgenson in 1828 of the setting aside of a reservation 'on the western side of the river Ouse, beyond Lake Fergus ... the grand place of rendezvous for the natives'[21]. This suggestion was initially taken up by Arthur; that is, 'to settle the Aborigines in some remote corner of the island, which should be strictly reserved for them'. The idea was, however, later dismissed when Arthur advised the Colonial Office that 'My intention was to have given up one district to the Natives, but such a spirit of dissention exists amongst the tribes themselves, that it cannot possibly be accomplished.' He acknowledged the difficulties attached to any such scheme, including 'the migratory habits of the Aborigines'.[22] These more humane suggestions – that is, treaties and

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[18] Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, p. 941, n. 29.
[19] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 43, n.44.
[20] West, *The History of Tasmania*, p. 625, n. 28, quoting Arthur. However, treaties between colonizers and Indigenous populations seldom provided security of land tenure and protection of cultural practices. They were more observed in the breach – see chapter three above in respect of the Absarokee of North America.
[21] Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land*, pp. 33-37. As noted in chapters above, this is the very location from where the last of the *Mairremmener* People were taken by Robinson, and escorted to Hobart. See also Jorgenson, *Report of the proceedings of an armed party of rangers ...*, 28 February 1831, AOT CSO1/1/320/7578, pp. 351-408: 'the place where the native tribes assemble once a year for the purpose of general deliberation', p. 361; and the *Hobart Town Courier*, 10 December 1831 – 'it is supposed they take up their winter quarters in that neighbourhood.'
[22] *Van Diemen's Land: Copies of all correspondence*, pp. 4, 5. Arthur referred the proposal to the Land Commissioners then carrying out their surveys of the island. They recommended the north east coast,

reservations – mechanisms of conciliation that had been used, and were later used, in other colonies – were only briefly considered. The more radical measures adopted by Arthur against the *Mairremmener* People in the following years, such as the attempt at expulsion from the proclaimed 'settled districts'; the declarations of martial law; the infamous 'Line Campaign' and *levée en masse* of 1830; and finally, the conciliatory missions of George Augustus Robinson, which ended with the exile of all surviving Tasmanians to Flinders Island, including the remnant *Mairremmener*, are considered next.

A growing storm: clashes in 1825, 1826 and 1827

An extended drought had affected Van Diemen's Land throughout 1824. In December 1825, in noting the 'abundance of grass and very great crop', Robert Knopwood observed that 'Last year at this time we had scarce any food for the cattle and horses: it was very dry.'[23] The consequences of drought, with a lack of water and feed, had probably driven native animals onto the Central Plateau. The year had also brought an outbreak of bushranging, and the activities of the gang lead by Matthew Brady and James McCabe in particular kept the 'whole colony on the *qui vive*, no one knowing how soon he may be attacked'.[24] Melville claimed that 'the whole disposable force of the Colony, both civil and military, was then sent in pursuit of Brady and his gang ... the public journals were filled with repeated outrages of these men'.[25] The combination of the long term effects of the drought of the previous year and the presence of large numbers of armed men in the bush, outside the settled districts, no doubt combined to encourage the *Mairremmener* bands to keep well out of harm's way, probably on the wilder parts of the Central Plateau. On the east coast in particular, the swelling numbers of settlers taking up lands around Great Oyster and Spring Bays and the almost constant presence of bushrangers and the military in the area effectively deprived the *Loontemairrener, Karninghe* and *Laremairremener*

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as it was (among other reasons), 'the best sheltered and warmest part of the island, and remote from the settled districts.' The comment again demonstrated the total lack of understanding of the nomadic culture of the Aborigines, and of the differences between the socio-linguist groups. It was also advice ignored when Arthur later adopted the proposal to exile the remnant Peoples on Flinders Island.

[23] Knopwood, *Diary*, p. 463. On 9 February 1825, Knopwood noted the 'greatest heat I ever remembered but once, the thermomiter [sic] stood at 102 in the shade', p. 444.

[24] E. Fitzsymonds (ed), *Brady: Bushrangers in Van Diemen's Land 1824-1827*, (from James Calder's text of 1873), Hobart: Sullivan's Cove, 1979, p. 37.

[25] Melville, *The History of the Island of Van Diemen's Land*, pp. 47, 48.

bands of free access to their traditional country.[26] The lack of observations of Aborigines in the settled districts was, however, no evidence of their total absence, as their ability to avoid contact was soon to become very apparent.

The record of clashes between Aborigines and settlers in 1825 involved mainly incidents outside or on the fringes of the country of the *Mairremmener*. A few clashes did take place within the Midlands, that is, within the settled districts. At Michael Howe's Marsh, west of the future township of Oatlands, a stock keeper was speared. Other attacks took place on the upper reaches of the Macquarie, Lake and Elizabeth Rivers, and at Macgills Marsh. The most serious clash – an attack by an estimated eighty Aborigines on Jonathan Kinsey's farm on the upper Macquarie – resulted in the murder of two stock keepers and the plundering of their hut. The farms of David Lord and William Stocker were attacked and a stock keeper threatened with spearing, one assailant speaking English.[27] These latter attacks were near the route of the Aboriginal road following the course of the Little Swanport River. English was also spoken by an attacker at Dr Pearson's property on the Elizabeth River. A party of a reported eighty warriors at that location was indicative of a combined group of bands, and a further indication of the agglomeration of bands as the result of diminishing numbers. If the massed group represented the totality of the warriors available in the area at that time, it was also a measure of the rapidly dwindling population among the *Mairremmener*. Eighty men would represent a total population of perhaps three hundred, well down from the one thousand thought to be present in 1803. The observation of an English-speaking Aborigine during the two attacks may have indicated the presence of Kickerterpoller (Black Tom), whose skills as a leader in the attacks on the settlers were by now well-developed, and this probability is confirmed by the events of 1826.

The absence of reports of attacks on the lower Central Plateau during 1825 are probably also indicative of the absence of stock on the Plateau, the rains bringing relief from the 1824 drought and providing adequate stock feed within the settled districts, and, at the same time, providing a safe haven on the Plateau for the remnant *Mairremmener* People. However, the situation changed dramatically in 1826. Clashes

[26] Nyman, *The East Coasters*, pp. 45-54.
[27] Plomley, *Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, pp. 59, 60.

took place throughout *Mairremmener* country, many on the lower Central Plateau, where the practice of transhumance had resumed during the warmer months. In January, stock keeper George Scott was killed on David Burn's property on the Big (Ouse) River, and settler Patrick McCarthy was killed on his Clyde River property; his wife and children harassed. The hut on James Triffith's property, also on the Big River, was plundered. On 29 April, stonemason John Browning was killed and Richard Smith wounded on the property of A. W. H. Humphrey on the Macquarie Plains. The hut was plundered and firearms were taken. Kickerterpoller was reported as being present. The *Colonial Times* claimed that Browning had always treated the 'tribe' kindly. Land Commissioner Roderic O'Connor later reported that 'the last residents were obliged to fly'.[28] In October, three unnamed stock keepers were killed on Edward Nicholas' and William Allardyce's properties on the Clyde River at Bark Hut Plains. On 3 November, stock keeper James Scott was killed on Thomas Pitcairn's property on the Shannon River, and two stock keepers were harassed on the nearby properties of James Ross and George Thomson. Scott's hut was plundered. The report in the *Colonial Times* on 10 November claimed that two hundred Aborigines were engaged in the clash, one threatening the stock keepers in English to 'go away'. Finally, on 21 and 22 November, the properties of John Risely and Andrew Downie on the Ouse River were attacked, and stock keeper John Monks was killed, William Priest wounded, and another harassed. The *Colonial Times* reported that the attackers were the 'Big River tribe', up to one hundred and sixty in number, and one Aborigine could speak very good English. Downie's men pursued the attackers and claimed to have killed two.[29] Unattributed reports circulated of 'a black native, half-civilized, who had been some time at Macquarie Harbour' joining 'a tribe of about 100', leading them 'to commit various and atrocious acts of aggression on the sequestered huts in the neighbourhood of the Shannon and the Lakes'. The editor of the *Hobart Town Gazette* hoped that

> the parties, who are now out in quest of the disturbers of the Public peace, will succeed in apprehending this man, and will hinder him from corrupting and misleading these ignorant, and if left to themselves, harmless natives.[30]

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[28] Plomley, *Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, p. 60; *Colonial Times*, 5 & 12 May, 16 June 1826; *Journals of the Land Commissioners*, p. 45.

[29] Plomley, pp. 61, 62; *Colonial Times,* 10, 24 November 1826. The reported '200 natives' appears to be an exaggeration; even 'one hundred and sixty' appears excessive.

[30] *Hobart Town Gazette*, 7 & 14 October 1826. The report attempted to raise the spectre of another leader similar to Musquito.

Properties along the routes of the Aboriginal roads from the east coast also suffered attacks. In March and April 1826, one 'man' (stock keeper?) was killed and another wounded on Thomas Buxton's property 'Mayfield' at Little Swanport. The hut was plundered and firearms, ammunition, food and other goods taken. Stock keeper Thomas Colby was killed on Paddy Harte's farm on the Little Swanport River. In June, an attack took place at Thomas Clitherow's property at Jerusalem, where Johnson, an overseer, was wounded and three stock keepers harassed. The hut was plundered and three firearms taken. Kickerterpoller was reported as being present, and the attack was blamed on 'gross conduct' of a stock keeper. A murderous series of clashes took place in the one locality in November. The first occurred on the 7th on George Simpson's property at Pennyroyal Creek near its confluence with the Macquarie River, when a reported thirty Aborigines led by Kickerterpoller killed stock keeper John Guinea, and plundered the hut. On the same day, on the Macquarie River, the hut of Lewis Gilles was burned and his stock keeper Reynolds killed. Four days later, George Taylor Junior was killed on his father's property 'Valleyfield', on the Macquarie. Kickerterpoller was reported to have led two more attacks late in the year. The first, at the Cross Marsh, saw the plundering of a stock keeper's hut and a sawyer harassed; the second was at Alexander Laing's property at Brushy Plains, where Kickerterpoller and others were captured.[31] These concerted attacks occurred at a time and place where the bands could be expected; that is, on the lower Central Plateau in the warmer months, and along the nomadic roads and on the east coast during the colder periods. The nature of the clashes in *Mairremmener* country during 1826 demonstrated that the objective was the expulsion of the alien "beings"; and during this time the *Mairremmener* was ably led by Kickerterpoller until he was captured. Thirteen settlers and their servants were killed, a number wounded, huts burned, property destroyed and stock driven off. The temporary abandonment of the settlements on the Ouse River was a small victory for the *Mairremmener*, evidence of the effectiveness of their hit-and-run tactics. The objective of driving the invaders out of their country was confirmed by the pattern of the attacks noted above, including the seizing of firearms and ammunition.[32]

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[31] Plomley, *Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, p. 62; Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 109 – Robinson saw 'Tom Birch' (Kickerterpoller) in Hobart Town Gaol in 1829. 'Gross conduct' was the euphemism for sexual assaults on Aboriginal women.

[32] James Calder referred to the clashes as 'systematised assaults', and noted that firearms 'were the articles prized most'. He claimed that the Aborigines 'were practised in using them; but there is no

The clashes that occurred in the following year were almost as bloody. While they took place throughout the settled districts including the north and north-east, the vast majority took place in *Mairremmener* country, from the east coast, through the Midlands and on the Central Plateau. The attacks, in the main, were on properties along the routes of the Aboriginal roads, many at the point of concentration in the Oatlands-Jericho district, which had now become a centre of settler activity. A military post was established at Oatlands in 1827, including the construction of a log gaol and barracks. A police post, initially operating from Anstey Barton, the property of police magistrate Thomas Anstey, was also established. The first constable was the ubiquitous Jorgen Jorgenson.[33] An indication of the growth and spread of the settler population was given by the Lieutenant-Governor in a despatch to William Huskisson, Secretary of State for the Colonies, on 1 May 1828, when Arthur estimated the colony's white population at seventeen thousand, an increase of about fifteen hundred since 1826. No census had been carried out for four years, in part because of the frequency of the clashes between the Aborigines and the settlers.[34] A comparison between the extent of the settled districts shown on Thomas Scott's map of 1824, with that of George Frankland's in 1835 indicated the enormous growth in settlements along the Hobart Town – Launceston Road, and particularly the growth in and about the townships of Oatlands, Ross and Campbell Town, all within the country of the *Mairremmener*. Oatlands, in particular, was to become the centre of all operations against the so-called Oyster Bay and Big River tribes, given its location in the midst of the troubled area, in part a recognition of the capabilities of police magistrate Anstey. It also lay at the confluence of the three main Aboriginal roads from the east coast.

The first attack in 1827 took place on Zachariah Sponsford's property on the Coal River, north of Richmond, where several cattle were killed. Sponsford was an

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instance of their bringing them into the field'. Calder, *Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits, &c.*, p. 10.

[33] Memo: Arthur to the Inspector of Roads, September 1827, CSO 1/176/4296 pp. 185, 190, 192; *Copies of all correspondence,* pp. 11, 12, 24-26; Jorgen Jorgenson, *A Shred of an Autobiography*, 1835, facs. ed. Hobart: Blubber Head Press, 2001, pp. 558, 559.

[34] *HRA*, Series III, Vol. VII, p. 298; Vol. VIII, p. 828. Plomley noted that H.M. Hull gave the 1827 settler population as 12,786 males, 4,047 females and an estimated 300 Aborigines. Plomley, *Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, p. 25.

early settler, having arrived in 1808, and was granted thirty acres.[35] His property was on the well-known Aboriginal road following the course of the Coal River, and Sponsford would have observed the migrations along the road. Further attacks in this district took place at Sorell Springs, Brown Mountain and Bagdad. In the Oatlands district, attacks took place at Four Square Gallows, Spring Hill, Jericho, Michael Howe's Marsh, Blackman River, Broad Marsh, Salt Pan Plains, Macquarie Springs, and Antill Ponds. On the lower Central Plateau settlers were attacked at the Abyssinia Tier, Bark Hut Plains, Bashan Plains, the Shannon River, and, at the northern end of the Plateau, at William Lawrence's property on the Lake River and on the Elizabeth River. An attack on Silas Gatehouse's property at Spring Bay occurred in May, and stock keeper Richard Addey was missing presumed killed. A second attack on the east coast took place on Adam Amos's property on the Swan River in November. Stock keeper David Thomas was harassed, and in attempting to escape was drowned. These were the only incidents on the coast during the year, and appeared to indicate that the Aborigines had continued to avoid the area.[36].

During 1827, the number of settlers killed in *Mairremmener* country amounted to five, with three stock keepers missing, believed killed, and a further eleven wounded. The reports indicated that, at least in three clashes, an unspecified number of Aborigines had been killed or wounded; as usual, no accurate counts of Aboriginal casualties were made. While the killings were less than those of the previous year, the pattern of *Mairremmener* attacks followed the now well-established course of the plundering and burning of huts, the removal of firearms, and the killing or driving away of stock. In several instances sawn timber was burned. The numbers of attackers were estimated between thirty and five hundred, with forty to sixty being the most common numbers quoted. Some of the attackers spoke English, and several reports named 'Black Tom' (Kickerterpoller) as the leader, ending with his capture – presumably for a second time – at Russell Falls in November 1827.[37] However, other warriors had emerged as leaders to ably replace Kickerterpoller, and most of them spoke or understood English: men such as Kallerromter (Tippoo) of the *Lairmairremener* from Spring Bay; Maccamee (Washington) of the

[35] Evans, *A Geographical, Historical and Topographical Description*, p. 128, 'Argyle 39'; *Journal of the Land Commissioners*, p. 148.
[36] Plomley, *Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, pp. 62-66.
[37] P. 65. Stock were at times driven into rivers and drowned – p. 60.

Toererpunmairinnerpairener from the Great Lake; Memerlannelargenna of the *Tyerrernotepanner* from the Campbell Town district; and particularly Montpeliatter of the *Lairmairrener* from Big River, who lead the last remnant People taken from the west of Platform Bluff in 1831.[38] Stock keepers were the most frequent victims, located as they were in isolated areas, often without company. The level of concern at the increasing violence is reflected in the Lieutenant-Governor's despatch to Viscount Goderich, Secretary of State for the Colonies, on 10 January 1828. Arthur noted:

> [the Aborigines] have latterly assumed so formidable appearance, and perpetrated such repeated outrages within the settled districts, that I have been pressingly called upon by the settlers, in several petitions, to adopt some measure which should effectively free them from these troublesome assailants ... The necessity of taking some decisive step ... becomes every day more apparent, as the settlers advance on the favourite haunts of the Natives.[39]

This comment again mirrors the tensions within Arthur's administration. On the one hand, he was responsible for the well-being of all British subjects under his charge, Aboriginal and white alike, and the assaults upon each other were now verging on open warfare. His responsibility was to keep the peace, but this could never be achieved while the dispossession of the Aborigines continued apace. The first 'decisive step' was about to be taken.

Protection by expulsion: the proclamation of the 'settled districts'.

On 17 April 1828, Lieutenant-Governor Arthur sent a despatch to Lord Goderich, Secretary of State for the Colonies, advising that, after lengthy deliberations and discussion with the Executive Council, he was 'convinced of the absolute necessity of separating the Aborigines altogether from the white inhabitants, and of removing the former entirely from the settled districts, until their habits shall become more civilized.' In noting the outrages committed on both sides in the conflict, Arthur claimed it was 'perhaps ... in vain to trace the cause of the evil which exists; my duty is plainly to remove its effects'.[40] He enclosed with the despatch a copy of a proclamation made that same day which directed all magistrates and their deputies to effect 'the retirement or expulsion of the Aborigines from the settled

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[38] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, pp. 424, 429, 476, 486, 492, 516, 517, 547, 569, 572, 1000. The first two named were to gain notoriety in 1831 as two of the killers of Captain Thomas and his superintendent Parker at Port Sorell. The very presence of these leaders from diverse bands acting in concert is an indication of the diminishing numbers within the bands, and the common desire to expel the invaders.

[39] *Copies of all correspondence*, pp. 3, 4.

[40] *Copies of all correspondence*, p. 5. This disingenuous despatch attempts to convey the impression that Arthur had taken all possible steps towards conciliation, when, to that point of time, he had done very little. Once more, the failure to recognise and understand Aboriginal culture and language was to push Arthur towards the inevitable and violent conclusion.

districts of this territory', and to authorize and command 'His Majesty's civil subjects ... to obey the civil, and to aid and assist the military power' to enforce the order; and to 'resort to whatever means a severe and inevitable necessity may dictate for carrying [the order] into execution'. Force was to be avoided; prisoners were to be treated with 'the utmost humanity and compassion'. An exemption by means of a 'general passport' issued to Aboriginal leaders would be granted for annual travel through the settled districts 'in quest of shell fish, for sustenance'. The proclamation was preceded by a lengthy preamble reciting the necessity for expelling the Aborigines, particularly because of their 'growing spirit of hatred, outrage and enmity, against the subjects of His Majesty resident in this colony'.[41] The absurdity of the proclamation was patent. Apart from the farcical 'general passport', there was virtually no communication between Aborigines and settlers, and few spoke each others' language.[42] Arthur made a token attempt at communicating the intent of the proclamation by having a pictograph distributed which, through a series of drawings, was supposed to demonstrate the benefits of black and white living in harmony, and the consequences of conflict. It contained graphic illustrations of both Aborigines and settlers firstly in a state of harmony and tranquillity, then being hanged for murders. The pictographs, painted on boards, were nailed to trees on the extremities of the settled areas.[43] By implication, the proclamation denied that the Aborigines were British subjects, yet the commission of the first Lieutenant-Governor, David Collins ordered him to 'place the Native Inhabitants ... in the King's Peace, and to afford their persons and Property the Protection of British Law', the very rights of citizenship.[44] Although the settlers were forbidden to use violence without the countenance of the magistrates or the military, the very act of authorising deadly force against British subjects without due process was contrary to the common law.

The proclamation did not define 'the settled districts'; however, a line of military posts at places representing the boundaries was established at Launceston,

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[41] pp. 6, 7.

[42] As previously noted, at a public meeting held in Hobart on 22 September 1830, Mr Hackett declared that 'He did not think there were 5 persons in the island who could converse with or make themselves understood by [the Aborigines].' *The Hobart Town Courier,* 25 September 1830. Also the criticism of the failure to study Tasmanian languages by Baron Charles von Hügel, *New Holland Journal,* p. 144. However, as discussed under, Arthur's proclamation was carefully framed to complement further actions. See also Melville, *The History of the Island of Van Diemen's Land,* pp. 80-82.

[43] West, *The History of Tasmania,* p. 278; Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians,* pp. 83, 84.

[44] *HRA* Series III, Vol. I, p. 529.

Oyster Bay, Brighton, Clyde, New Norfolk, the Punt on the South Esk River, St. Paul's Plains, Isis River, Norfolk Plains, Oatlands, Macquarie Harbour, Ross and Pitt Water. The failure to accurately define the boundaries placed that responsibility in the hands of the military and settlers on the spot, giving them the opportunity to make arbitrary decisions. This mistake was corrected in the later proclamation of martial law on 1 Novembers 1828, when the extent over which it was to be enforced was defined by exclusion of the south, south west, western and north eastern parts of the island. Therefore, in effect, the martial law proclamation was limited to the country of the *Mairremmener,* the so-called 'Oyster Bay and Big River Tribes'. All other Tasmanian socio-linguistic groups were exempted.

A very bloody year: the drums of war

The year 1828 began as the last had ended. More frequent attacks were taking place, particularly in *Mairremmener* country. The pattern was the same: in the warmer months attacks were carried out on the Central Plateau, and as the temperatures cooled, the clashes occurred in the Midlands or on the east coast. For example, from January to March Aborigines attacked properties at Bothwell, Lake Sorell, the Ouse River, Macguires Marsh, The Hermitage on the Shannon River, Patrick Plains, the lower Clyde, Quoin Hill and Hollow Tree. All these areas lay on the lower Central Plateau. Three stock keepers were killed, five were wounded, a large number harassed, fourteen huts plundered, some burned, and five firearms taken. From late March, the bulk of the attacks took place in the Midlands and the east coast, at places such as Bagdad, the Elizabeth River, the Eastern Tiers, Ross, the Avoca and South Esk Rivers, Antill Ponds, Sorell Springs, Macgills Marsh, Sorell, Blue Hills, Hollow Tree Bottom, Green Ponds, Lovely Banks and Oatlands. On the east coast, a concerted effort was made by the *Mairremmener* bands to expel the invaders, in contrast to the activities of the previous year, when attacks had been few. Settlers' farms were attacked at Great Swanport, Schouten Island, Pitt Water, Grindstone Bay, Prosser's Plains, Little Swanport, Spring Bay, Bream Creek and Maloney's Sugarloaf. George Meredith, in particular, was subjected to repeated attacks, including one upon his bay whaling station on Schouten Island. In the Midlands and on the east coast, fifteen men, women and children were murdered, thirty were wounded and a further thirty-seven harassed. One man was missing. Thirty-one houses and huts were plundered and some were burned. Six firearms were taken. Many sheep and cattle

(and four horses) were killed or driven off. There were reports of crop and haystack burnings, and the removal of potatoes and turnips.

The assailants also suffered casualties. The reports of band numbers ranged from six to three hundred, with a number of the Aborigines speaking English, including a woman accompanying one band. Another band was identified as 'the Big River mob and others united'; another as the 'Hobart Town tribe'. The reports of Aborigines killed were vague. Reports mentioned 'some', 'more' or 'perhaps'. Confirmed numbers totalled three, with four captured, including Eumarrah (Moleteheerlaggenner), a man of the Stoney Creek band, whose country was outside that of the *Mairremmener*, and Nurnepattener (Jemima), a woman from the north east. They were captured by Gilbert Robertson and a party of military and settlers at Lake Crescent on 12 November 1828, from a band of sixty who attacked Phillip Pitt's stock keeper's hut, and wounded William Doby, his stock keeper. The subsequent decision to release Eumarrah into the care of Robertson without trial was a precedent followed by Lieutenant-Governor Arthur in the cases of later captives.[45]

The clashes in 1828 created uproar among the settlers. However, it was the murders of women and children at the hands of the Aborigines which created the most public outcry. In particular, the murders of Esther Gough and her daughter Alicia, and their maidservant Ann Geary on 9 October 1828 aroused an enormous hue and cry and demand for action by the government. Patrick Gough, his wife Esther, daughters Mary and Alicia and another infant were settlers on a small allotment near Lemon's Lagoon (Lake Tiberias). On the 9 October, Patrick Gough and two others set out after a band of Aborigines suspected of plundering a neighbouring property. While they were absent, the band descended on Gough's hut, killing Ann Geary and Alicia, and severely wounding Esther and Mary Gough. The infant was slightly wounded. The hut was plundered, and the Aborigines were reported as speaking English when threatening the women and children. Esther Gough died of her wounds on 31 October, and was buried at Oatlands with her daughter Alicia. The ceremony was performed 'by some Soldier in the 40th Rt. – in the Roman Catholic form.' Ann Geary was

[45] Melville, *The History of the Island of Van Diemen's Land*, pp. 85-88; Plomley, *Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, p. 74; *Journal of the Land Commissioners*, p. 144.

buried at Green Ponds. The colonial press was outraged, the *Hobart Town Courier* declaring that

> it can no longer be doubted that the natives have formed a systematic organized plan for carrying on a war of extermination against the white inhabitants of the colony ... it will require some immediate and vigorous measures to repel attacks, which if they are not speedily put a stop to, must render it impossible to guard the lives and property of the colonists against the most alarming consequences.[46]

The Gough murders were followed soon after by a savage attack on the family of Thomas Langford, a settler at Green Ponds. His son John was killed, his wife and daughter wounded, and their hut was plundered. A sawyer, Zachariah Chaffey, pursued the attacking band, and claimed that a white man, one 'Green', who was known to him, was in their company, 'his face blackened'. The *Hobart Town Gazette* was now placing blame upon all Aborigines, claiming that

> Where a murder has been committed, though the tribe assisting should amount to hundreds, , as they are now within the pale of the law ... they should if possible be brought to court and tried criminally for their lives.[47]

The Lieutenant-Governor had already decided to act. By proclamation of 1 November 1828, Arthur declared martial law within the settled districts, with the exception of the areas mentioned above. In the preamble to the proclamation, he noted the 'most cruel and sanguinary acts of violence and outrage' committed by the Aborigines since the expulsion order of 15 April 1828, especially 'upon unoffending and defenceless women and children'. The proclamation was directed solely at the Aborigines, that is, the *Mairremmener* People, over whose country the proclamation applied.[48]

Under his instructions from the British government, Arthur had the power to proclaim martial law, and was well aware of the grounds for and the consequences of any such proclamation. He had observed first hand such a declaration against rebels in Barbados in 1816, and was in England when the issue of a declaration of martial law in Demerara in 1823 was debated by the Parliament. Under the British constitution, proclamation of martial law was a crown prerogative, to be 'put in force against rebels and enemies [as] a more regular and convenient mode of exercising a right to kill in

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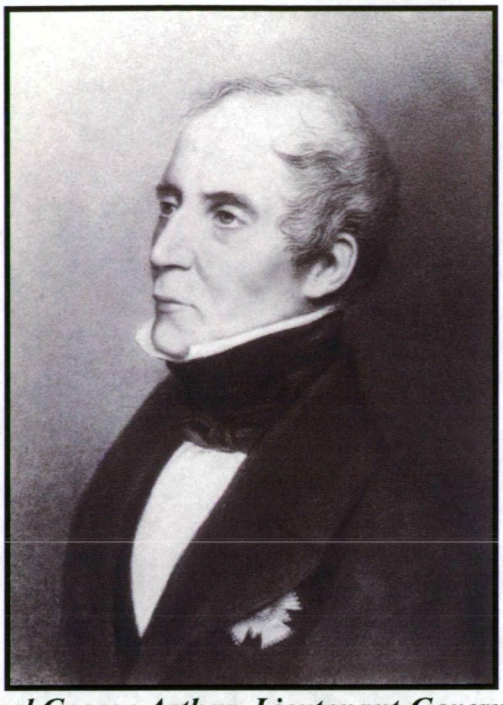
[46] *Hobart Town Courier,* 18 October 1828; *Return of Burials performed in the District of Oatlands ending December 1828*, Archives Office of Tasmania, NS2334/1/1. Lake Tiberius was the point of convergence of the three Aboriginal roads from the east coast.

[47] *Hobart Town Gazette,* I November 1828; Plomley, *Aboriginal/Settler Clash,* p. 73. The presence of 'white man' Green, a former convict servant of Edward Lord, was never confirmed, and there is no record of his apprehension.

[48] *Copies of all correspondence*, pp. 27, 28. The proclamation specifically exempted the exercise of the common law for all purposes other than 'the carrying on [of] military operations against the Natives'.

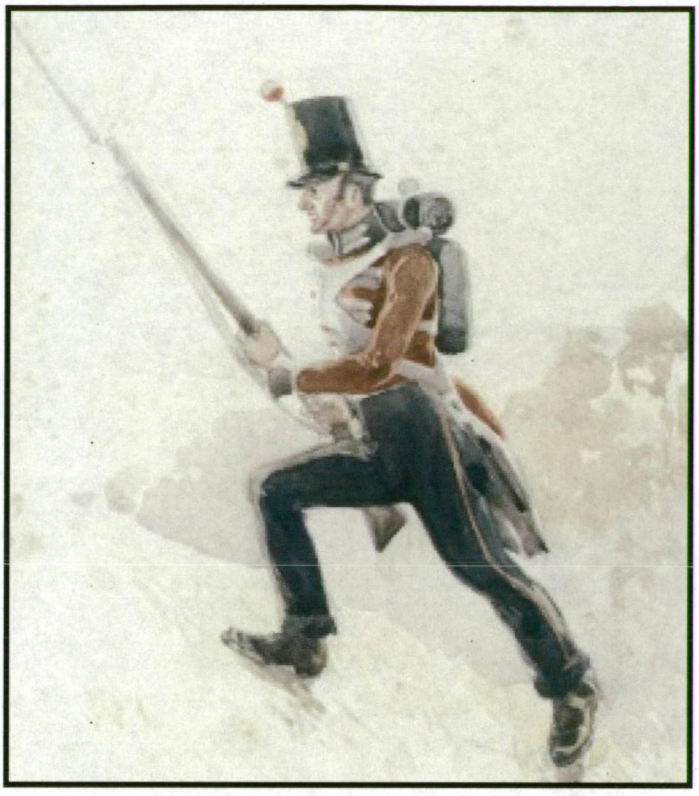


Colonel George Arthur, Lieutenant-Governor of Van Diemen's Land 1824-1836
J.W. Beattie, *The Governors of Tasmania*, 1896
Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts

'Governor Davey's proclamation to the Aborigines'
Incorrectly attributed to Davey, this is the pictograph designed by Surveyor–General George Frankland in 1828, in support of Arthur's proclamation of exclusion of Aborigines from the settled districts
Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts

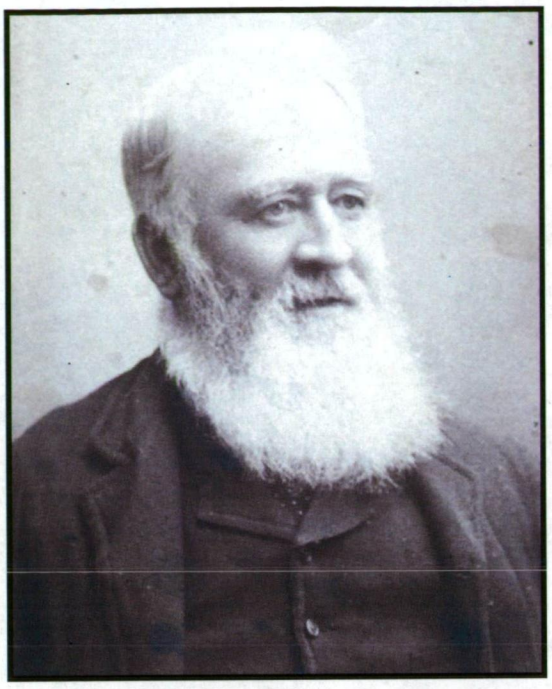
'Anstey Barton' – property of Thomas Anstey, police magistrate, Oatlands District
Artist unknown
Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts
Anstey Barton was the first police post for the Oatlands District, established in 1827

John Batman
Archives Office of Tasmania, Pretyman Collection: NS1013

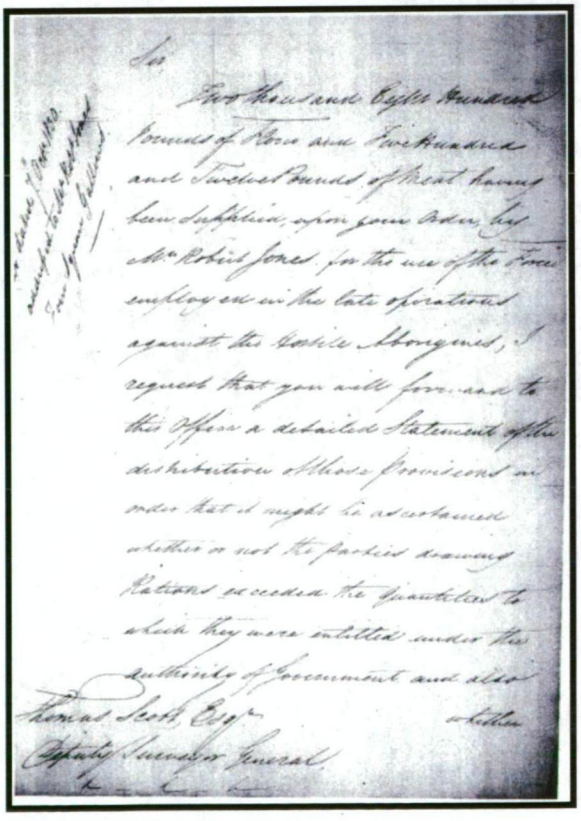


'On the wing of a storming party'
British soldier of the 40th Regiment of Foot, 1854.
Australian War Museum,Canberra
The uniform and equipment depicted was similar to that in use in the 1830s.

Oatlands Town Survey, 1832
The survey, carried out by assistant surveyor William Sharland, shows
the police post used as a major depot in the Black War of 1830
Information and Land Services Division, Department of Primary Industry and Water



'Mr Robert Jones JP, Kempton'
Charles Wherrett, Hobart, 1872
Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts
Robert Jones was the owner of a property at Four Square Gallows in the Lower Marshes, and supplied large quantities of flour and meat to the commissariat during the Line Campaign of 1830



Sir

Five Thousand Eight Hundred Pounds of Flour and Five Hundred and Twelve Pounds of Meat having been supplied, upon your Order, by Mr Robert Jones, for the use of the Men employed in the late operations against the Native Aborigines, I request that you will forward to this Office a detailed Statement of the distribution of those Provisions in order that it might be ascertained whether or not the parties drawing Rations exceeded the Quantities to which they were entitled under the authority of Government and also

Thomas Scott Esqr
Deputy Surveyor General

Letter from Assistant Commissary Moodie to Thomas Scott, querying the quantities of flour supplied by Robert Jones
Thomas Scott Papers, Mitchell Library, Sydney, A1055

war, a right originating in self-defence'. To legally justify any such proclamation there had to be a rebellion amounting to a war against the Crown, and the rebels had to have forfeited their right to quarter. It could only be proclaimed in the case of 'domestic danger 'arising from foreign invasion or native insurrection to which both civilians and soldiers are equally subject, and which [proclamation] is enforced by military authority.'[49] The justification for the declaration by Arthur – the 'insurrection' – was the failure of the Aborigines to obey the order expelling them from the settled districts. In short, by proclaiming martial law Arthur was declaring that the *Mairremmener* were outlaws and rebels at war with the Crown. While Arthur had been hesitant in the past to regard the violent clashes between Aborigines and settlers as warfare, even though that was the commonly held opinion of the settlers themselves, now, by this proclamation, (and later by a definitive statement made by the Executive Council of Van Diemen's Land on 27 August 1830), he conceded that a state of war existed.[50] He now had the legal means at his disposal to subdue the Aborigines by force if necessary, and to incarcerate or expel them at will, using all the military and civil apparatus of the state without the need to observe common law rights. All Aboriginal men, women and children, regardless of their individual complicity or otherwise in any of the acts of violence against the settlers, were liable to be summarily killed or captured and expelled. None of this legal contrivance was or could have been understood by the majority of the *Mairremmener*, even given some among their number spoke or understood English. Henry Melville reported a conversation between the Lieutenant-Governor and Black Tom (Kickerterpoller), conveyed to him by a 'bystander', where the purport of both proclamations were read to and commented on by Kickerterpoller, who was claimed to have replied '"He [the Aborigines] can't read, who tell him?"'. While it is probable that such a conversation took place, the language used as reported by Melville would appear to be more his

[49] Sir James Mackintosh quoted in G.G. Phillimore, 'Martial Law in Rebellion', *Journal of the Society of Comparative Legislation*, New Series, Vol. 2, No. 1, (1900), p. 49-53.

[50] The Executive Council noted that 'It appears ... now , as it did nearly two years ago, that the wanton and barbarous murders committed by the Natives indiscriminately ... on men armed and unarmed, and on defenceless women and children, can be considered in no other light than acts of warfare against the settlers generally'. *Copies of all correspondence*, p. 63. Under international law of the time no formal declaration of war was necessary – see J.B. Atlay, 'Legitimate and illegitimate modes of warfare', *Journal of the Society of Comparative Legislation*, New Series, Vol. 6, No.1, (1905). Keith Windschuttle, in denying the existence of a state of war, claimed that the violent clashes needed to 'be elevated above the level of crime or revenge' in order to form warfare. The two 'elevating qualities' were firstly a political objective, and secondly, a form of political organization to achieve the political end. Windschuttle denied either existed among the Aborigines. Windschuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal* History, pp. 99, 102.

opinion than fact.[51] That aside, Kickerterpoller would have expressed his concern at the inability of the Aborigines to comprehend the intent of the proclamation. In the event, Arthur had created, with the aim of placating the settlers and perhaps with intent, a law that could not be obeyed, followed by a deadly solution to an intractable problem.

Preparations for war: martial law and the call-to-arms

The provisions of both the expulsion and martial law proclamations had not the slightest effect; the strife grew considerably worse. To enforce the proclamations, Arthur had set a number of actions in train. Firstly, he styled himself 'Colonel Commanding', a title he maintained and used in general orders throughout the military operations that followed, evidence in itself that a military campaign was about to begin.[52] Secondly, he strengthened the military posts set up following the first proclamation. Sixty-eight additional troops of the 40th Regiment were sent to six outposts. The officers in charge were ordered to form small detachments to search for and 'repel from or capture the aboriginal Natives in their respective districts.'[53] Arthur had directed that a police officer, representing the civil power, be attached to each search party. John McMahon noted that this procedure led to 'dissatisfaction in the garrison', particularly where the constable involved was a ticket of leave convict, and was placed in charge of the detachment. McMahon also pointed out that the British infantry was not trained in counter-insurgency operations, which required 'self-discipline, self-motivation and bushwise initiative – characteristics which ... were not encouraged.'[54] This very lack of appropriate characteristics required of the soldiers, together with the bright-red uniform which made them highly visible, meant that they were singularly ineffective.[55] Police magistrate Anstey noted that 'Probably the main usefulness of the soldiers was in deterring the natives from making attacks'.[56]

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[51] Melville, *The History of the Island of Van Diemen's Land*, pp. 80-82. The language used by 'Black Tom' is redolent of the contemporary reporting of the language of the Negro slaves in the United States.

[52] *Copies of all correspondence*, p.22 ff. It was his Army rank, and as viceroy, he had the role as head of the military.

[53] p. 26.

[54] J. F. McMahon, 'The British Army: Its Role in the Counter-Insurgency in the Black War in Van Diemen's Land', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 1995/96, pp. 58-60.

[55] John Connor, 'British Frontier Warfare Logistics and the 'Black Line', Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania), 1830', *War in History*, Vol. 9, No. 2, (2002), p. 148.

[56] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 30.

The third action instituted by the Lieutenant-Governor was the formation of 'roving parties'. Plomley claimed that it has not been determined who developed the idea of the formation of civilian parties for the purpose of capturing or expelling the Aborigines, but pointed out that the first party was organised under the command of Gilbert Robertson, then chief district constable at Richmond, in November 1828. This party, guided by Kickerterpoller, succeeded in capturing five Aborigines at Swanport. The success led to the formation in May 1829 of six parties based in Oatlands under the control of Anstey. Oatlands now became the centre of operations against the *Mairremmener*. Each party consisted of five convicts lead by a field constable, and three parties were superintended by Robertson, the other three by Jorgen Jorgenson. A separate party, apparently initially without official sanction, was organised and led by John Batman.[57] It would appear that the roving parties had as little success as the military. There was, at least until February 1830 when a reward system was instituted for the capture of Aborigines, little incentive for them to exert themselves, particularly in the case of the assigned convicts attached to the parties. Jorgenson outlined the impediments to their effective use in a report to Anstey in July 1829. Among the problems, he noted the lack of a plan, lack of discipline, inveterate laziness and deceit on the part of the convicts, a reluctance of the Aboriginal guides such as Kickerterpoller, to enter the country of bands other than their own, and the ability of the Aborigines to evade capture in the bush.[58] By May 1830, other roving parties were operating under John Sherwin and John Doran out of Bothwell, patrolling the Shannon and Big River country of the *Lairmairrener* bands. They appear to have been equally unsuccessful.[59] The real effect of the roving parties seemed to be the same as that of the military patrols; that is, the deterrence of attacks, or, in the infrequent event of contact being made, driving the Aborigines off. Batman's party provided an example of the latter when, advised that Aborigines were approaching James

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[57] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, pp. 30, 31; *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines*, pp. 19, 20; *HRA*. Series III, Vol. VIII, p.454. A report of the activities of Batman's party is found in Fenton, *A History of Tasmania*, pp.105, 106. Fenton claimed that Batman's party consisted of ten persons, including 'native women as spies and guides'. In September 1829, the party was reportedly attacked by 'a well armed mob of seventy natives belonging to the most sanguinary tribes of the island ... Fifteen of the native warriors were slain, and only one woman and a child were made prisoners; twenty dogs were shot'. Fenton does not quote any source. Plomley, *Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, does not record the event.

[58] *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines*, pp. 25-27. The rewards were £5 for each adult and £2 for each child captured, and in the case of convict servants 'indulgences'. Perhaps Kickerterpoller's 'reluctance' was a mechanism for protecting his people. See also Jorgenson, *Report of proceedings of an armed party.*

[59] James Erskine Calder papers, Latrobe Library, Melbourne, MS10913, letter to chief police magistrate Mulgrave.

Hooper's property at Spring Hill, he 'rode down immediately and when we got in sight see the house surrounded by Natives. I galloped down and the whole of them fled.'[60]

The ineffectiveness of the military patrols and roving parties was demonstrated by the clashes throughout 1829 and 1830. While many attacks took place throughout the colony, the preponderance occurred throughout *Mairremmener* country, from the east coast littoral, through the Midlands and onto the Central Plateau, involving all the *Mairremmener* bands. The Aborigines involved were now reported in smaller numbers, bands of twenty to fifty, a decline highlighted by Gilbert Robertson when searching the Lake Echo region in May 1829, observing that where he had seen villages of thirty to forty huts in the past, only four to five were now to be found.[61] Between I January 1829 and 30 September 1830, ten murders of settlers or stock keepers took place on the Central Plateau; at Lake Sorell, Bashan Plains, Macquires Marsh, Green Valley, Black Marsh, Bothwell and Regent's Plains (Lake River). A further ten settlers were killed in the Midlands; at the Macquarie River, Green Ponds, Constitution Hill, Jerusalem, the Eastern Marshes and Spring Hill. Seven men were killed in the Coal River district, at Carlton, Pitt Water, Brown Mountain, Sorell and Prosser's Plains; and three more on the east coast, at Swanport and Oyster Bay. The total of thirty deaths represented a massive escalation when added to the large number of wounding, harassment, plundering and burning of huts and occasionally crops and haystacks, and the killing and driving off of stock.[62]

As usual, accounts of Aborigines killed wounded or captured were sketchy, sometimes exaggerated, often not recorded. Ten were reported killed and three captured in attacks on George Meredith's and John Allen's properties at Great Swanport in January 1829. None of the assailants, dead or captured, were named, and the report may well be an exaggeration.[63] 'Bruni Island Jack' (Nelson) was killed in an attack on a property at Bothwell on 17 January 1829. An estimated eight to ten Aborigines were said to have been wounded in an attack on James Olding's property

[60] John Batman's Diary 3 March to 30 September 1830, Latrobe Library, Melbourne, MS 8284, Sunday, 22 August 1830. The use of men on horseback to drive off the attackers was becoming a more-common tactic.
[61] Plomley, *Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, p. 78.
[62] Details of above reports and those following from Plomley, *Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, pp. 75-93.
[63] Nyman, *East Coasters*, p. 81; Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, p. 102.

at Prosser's Plains in May 1829. One Aborigine was killed and 'several' wounded at Jerusalem in August, and one wounded at Sorell on 18 September 1829. Another wounding occurred at Sorell in December. No further *Mairremmener* casualties were reported until April 1830, when a severed arm was found in a mantrap at Little Swanport, and in May, when one man was wounded by Stephen Adey at the same location.[64] In August, on the Shannon River, a woman was killed and a boy captured, and Patrick Wood's men were reputed to have killed 'several' Aborigines and captured 'a chief Peletega'.[65] In all, if the reports were accurate, the *Mairremmener* had by far the best of the contest; however, accurate numbers of Aborigines killed or wounded will never be known.[66] Some of the attackers spoke English during the clashes, often with demands that the settlers leave. It is highly likely that the attacks were now being led by those warrior elders mentioned above; that is Kallerromter, Maccamee, Memerlannelargenna, and particularly Montpeliatter, and that they had at least a smattering of English. It is significant that the *Mairremmener* bands had not only agglomerated for the purpose of attacking the settlers, but had been reinforced by Aborigines from other socio-linguistic groups, as the presence of Eumarrah and Bruni Island Jack demonstrated. Even if Jack was a "town Aborigine"; that is, one used to frequenting Hobart Town, as did many *Nuenonne* People, his presence on the Central Plateau with the *Mairremmener* is notable.

The regularity and ferocity of the attacks were now the major concern of Arthur's administration. In a despatch dated 18 August 1829, to Under Secretary Twiss of the Colonial Office, Arthur noted that 'I still have much anxiety on my mind with regard to the Natives ... they still continue to make good their way through our outstations.' By 12 September 1829, he was reporting to Sir George Murray, Secretary of State for the Colonies, on 'our unpleasant warfare with the Aboriginal Natives ... this is the most anxious subject of my Government.[67] These reports were made in the face of Government Notices Nos. 160 and 166, in which the colonial secretary expressed the opinion that 'a less hostile disposition towards the European

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[64] 'Bruni Island Jack' was also known as 'Boomer Jack'. The arm was presumed to be that of Tongelongter - see Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, pp. 584, 585, 625, 626.
[65] Plomley, *Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, p. 92.There is no record in Robinson's diaries of an Aboriginal by that name.
[66] J. E. Calder considered that 'in these unrecorded encounters our countrymen got the worst of it, as they generally did.' Calder, *Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits , &c.*, p. 9.
[67] *HRA*, Series III, Vol. VIII, pp. 576, 577, 607.

inhabitants has been manifested by some of the aboriginal Natives', a proposition probably true only in respect of the *Nuennone* of Bruny Island, and the People of the south-east, below the Derwent Estuary.[68]

The Lieutenant-Governor's 'anxiety' was such that, on 24 December 1829, he appointed a standing committee to enquire into

> regulating the care and treatment of captured aborigines, and for suggesting such measures of conciliation as shall appear to you calculated to bring about a permanent friendly intercourse between the native tribes and the colonists

The committee's remit included proposals with a view to 'pacification of the natives'; the use of that phrase an ominous portent for the future of the *Mairremmener* People. The committee, later popularly known as the 'Aborigines' Committee', comprised Archdeacon William Grant Broughton, the head of the Church of England in the colonies, as chairman; the Reverends Bedford and Norman; the chief police magistrate, Peter Mulgrave; the colonial treasurer Jocelyn Thomas; the port officer Samuel Hill; and Dr James Scott. After considering and recommending a proposal to establish a mission station at Bruny Island (to which George Augustus Robinson was appointed superintendent), from 23 February 1830 the committee took evidence from a number of prominent settlers in an endeavour 'to obtain a connected view of the origin, progress, and existing character of [the Aborigines'] hostility.' The evidence, taken over two months, was given by settlers who Plomley claimed were 'extirpationists almost to a man'.[69] Some, like John Sherwin, declared 'they must be captured and exterminated'. George Espie said they were 'very treacherous', as did Robert Evans. Plomley's assessment of the attitude of the witnesses seemed somewhat jaundiced; several supported measures of conciliation, while not holding out much hope. William Brodridd for example was 'convinced that the majority of settlers [were] disposed to treat the Natives kindly'. On 19 March 1830, the committee made nine recommendations to the Lieutenant-Governor. The recommendations mostly stated the obvious: that the settlers should provide for their own self-defence; that the stock keepers should be warned of acts against the Aborigines which would invite retaliation; that the activities of the roving parties

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[68] *Copies of all correspondence*, p. 61, 62. The second order dated 27 August 1830, claimed that 'a friendly disposition [had] been *slightly* manifested by a tribe which had been hostile'. My emphasis.

[69] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 98; West, *The History of Tasmania*, p. 626 n. 30; *Copies of all correspondence*, p. 26. Robinson was appointed superintendent of the Bruny Island mission in March 1829 – *HRA*, Series III, Vol. VIII, pp. 322, 323.

should be better commanded and organised. Some new measures were proposed, including the formation of a mounted police force and an increase in the numbers of the Field Police. No recommendations were made for efforts at conciliation or understanding, with the exception of a recommendation that 'the prohibition to destroy Kangaroos, by hunting, shooting, or other means, within the limits prescribed to the Natives, be renewed with 'augmented strictness'.[70] Arthur, in acknowledging the committee's report and rejecting the proposal for a mounted police force, noted in the margins that many of the recommendations were already in force.

Little interest in the recommendations of the committee appeared in the public domain, perhaps for the reason that many leading citizens had already given evidence. Contrary to some of the views expressed to the committee, on 2 July 1830, the *Colonial Times* declared:

> We come forward ... the first we believe who have appeared in that character, as the apologists for, and the advocates of, the Aborigines. We are so far from regarding them as they are generally looked upon, that we think their cultivation and improvement of their condition might do much for them ... it may be useful to consider ... how to escape in future the evils that now attend our relationship with the miserable beings whose land we have occupied ...

The paper went on to suggest the formation of 'a considerable band of not less than two hundred members', to take to the field and bring the Aborigines – presumably the 'Oyster Bay and Big River tribes' – 'to fixed places, alive and free from harm'. The writer also advocated the use of 'ten or twenty from among that fine and manly race, our native youth', to assist the force.[71]

Not much government activity on the committee's report appeared to have taken place in the short term. The government seemed in denial given the tenor of Government Notices Nos. 160 and 166 of 19 June and 27 August 1830. In the few months to that date, some fifty attacks on settlers had taken place within *Mairremmener* country, including six murders. The second order did refer to 'recent outrages in the Oatlands and Clyde Districts', and encouraged the settlers to reinforce their means of self-protection, but gave no indication of intended action to ameliorate the situation.[72] However, by the end of August, the press was calling for action. On 28

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[70] *Copies of all correspondence*, pp. 43-46.
[71] *Colonial Times*, 2 July 1830. The publisher of the *Colonial Times*, Andrew Bent, was an outspoken opponent of the policies of the Lieutenant-Governor, and had been prosecuted for criminal libel.
[72] *Copies of all correspondence*, p. 62.

August, the *Hobart Town Courier* claimed, in specifically referring to the 'Big river or Oyster Bay mobs' that, 'however anxious we and all of us are to conciliate, and if possible enter into terms of pacification with these native tribes, it is impossible to look upon the hostile part of them in any other light than treacherous and determined foes.' The paper urged the government to engage in a 'bold, strenuous effort' to capture and exile all Aborigines to an island 'colony' out of Van Diemen's Land. Further, that the 'gentlemen of the committee whom His Excellency has appointed to consider the best means of ameliorating the condition of these poor creatures ... would not now look on such a step with disapprobation'.[73] While the *Colonial Times* was silent, the paper had made a similar suggestion in July. Patently, for political reasons, the Lieutenant-Governor had to act in a prompt manner, and on the same day as Government Notice No, 166 was issued, the Executive Council advised Arthur it had 'become absolutely necessary that some vigorous effort, upon a more extended scale than has hitherto been practicable, should be made for expelling these miserable people forthwith from the settled districts.' The Council called upon Arthur to seek the cooperation of the settlers to volunteer as reinforcements of the military to form 'a force sufficient for the accomplishment of this most necessary measure.'[74] The Lieutenant-Governor now had both governmental and public support for radical action to expel the *Mairremmener* bands, and, under Government Order No. 9 of 9 September 1830, he took the dramatic step of a call-to-arms of all settlers in order to raise a volunteer army for a military campaign soon to become notorious as the 'Black Line'. On 1 October 1830, Arthur by proclamation continued and extended martial law over the whole of the colony.[75]

The Black Line was a white line: the military campaign against the Aborigines

The proclamations and orders amounted to a declaration of war against the whole Aboriginal population of Van Diemen's Land, now considered in a state of

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[73] *Hobart Town Courier*, 28 August 1830. The publisher of the *Courier*, Dr James Ross, was sympathetic towards the government and its policies, not the least because he was also the publisher of *The Hobart Town Gazette*, the government's journal of record.

[74] *Copies of all correspondence*, pp.62-64.

[75] p. 71. The second declaration of martial law therefore encompassed all Aboriginal bands, including the *Mairremmener* bands covered by the first declaration, making all liable to summary justice. Professor Henry Reynolds (pers. comment) has suggested this may have been done to cover the acts of aggression by roving parties and settlers in other parts of Van Diemen's Land not included in the Line Campaign, particularly the actions against the north-eastern and Ben Lomond Peoples by John Batman's party.

rebellion as the King's enemies. They contained the usual caveats of the checking of bloodshed and the treatment of any captives 'with the utmost care and humanity'; however, the proclamations obviously contemplated bloodshed arising from the coming conflict [76]. The government orders and proclamations could not be communicated to the Aboriginal bands; therefore no warning of the potentially fatal results was given to them. The clashes with settlers continued as the preparations for the military campaign were set in train, and during October and November 1830 *Mairremmener* bands attacked settlers throughout the whole of the settled districts. While only one settler was killed during this time, many were wounded and the pattern of plundering, burning and killing and driving of stock continued. The numbers of Aborigines engaged in the attacks was reported as being not greater than fifty, often in much fewer numbers, a further indication of the dwindling numbers within the remnant bands.[77] The "enemy" force to be met by the volunteer army and the military was therefore tiny, probably much less than one hundred warriors, the total of able-bodied men among the agglomerated bands of the *Mairremmener*. This was a factor acknowledged by Arthur as far back as November 1828, when, in a private despatch to Under-Secretary for the Colonies, Robert Hay, he stated that 'I am now convinced that [the Aborigines'] numbers are far more limited than has hitherto been supposed, their migratory habits having led to very delusive notions regarding them.'[78]

The call-to arms – styled a *levée en masse* after the civilian armies of France during the conflict with the First Coalition in 1793 – was an unprecedented action in the Australian colonies. The call was enthusiastically embraced by the settlers. The *Hobart Town Courier* reported:

> It is with no small measure we present to our readers [Government Order No. 9: the call-to-arms]. The long wished for era of the complete cessation of the hostilities of the Blacks is, we trust, now at hand. No persuasion on our part we are convinced is wanting to rouse the inhabitants to accomplish the one grand and glorious object now before them.

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[76] *Copies of all correspondence,* p. 71. It was at the time accepted international law that no formal declaration of war was required – see Atlay, 'Legitimate and illegitimate modes of warfare'.

[77] Plomley, *Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, pp. 94-96. Many attacks also took place outside *Mairremmener* country, probably involving north-eastern and Ben Lomond bands.

[78] In fact, the numbers were probably much lower. During the October/November attacks, the largest party reported was approximately fifty, in the attack on the properties of Thomas Coffin and John Stacey at Sorell on 16 October, where stock keeper Thomas Pratt was killed. Plomley, p. 94. Also *HRA*, Series III, Vol. VIII, pp. 659, 853 n. 554 – James Ross estimated there were six hundred Aborigines in Van Diemen's Land in total in 1830; that is, all sociolinguistic groups. On that basis, the *Mairremmener* population must have been very small indeed.

The *Colonial Times* was equally pleased, if not so enthused, supporting the *levée* but urging caution in the tactics to be adopted in the coming campaign.[79] The composition of the campaign force was to include 550 troops of the 17th, 57th and 63rd Regiments. As the total number of troops in the Van Diemen's Land garrison amounted to 965 officers and men, there was public concern at the need for protecting the townships and guarding the prisons, particularly in Hobart Town and Launceston.[80] The concern was such that a meeting was held in the Hobart Town courthouse on 22 September 1830, for the purpose of organising a 'town guard' to aid the government and relieve the military. The meeting evolved into a debate between supporters of the proposed campaign and (a relatively-few) opponents, but overwhelmingly resolved that it was 'peculiarly the duty of every man to contribute to the common cause', and that a town guard be formed for a period of five weeks, commencing on 2 October. A committee of twenty-two citizens was appointed to wait on the Lieutenant-Governor. Arthur, in receiving the deputation the following day, accepted the offer, and praised the settlers' patriotism.[81]

The military campaign was scheduled to commence on 7 October 1830, and, by that time, 912 settlers accompanied by 738 convict servants had enrolled to participate. It was proposed that a line of men be formed to drive the Aborigines southwards onto Tasman's Peninsula, where they could be contained by a picket employed across the narrow East Bay Neck. The total force was therefore approximately 2,200 – a considerable army in the context of the time.[82] The logistics in organising and maintaining such a large force were immense; however, Arthur was able to call upon his own military expertise as well as that of the Surveyor-General, George Frankland, also a former experienced military officer. The campaign plan was prepared by Frankland with the active support of the Lieutenant-Governor. Arthur provided minute information, even to the extent of detailing the methods of constructing palisades and abbatis.[83] A campaign map was prepared by the Land Survey Department, setting out the stages of the advance of the line in its sweep southwards. It was to commence on the east coast at St.Patricks Head, then along a

[79] *Hobart Town Courier*, 11 September 1830; *Colonial Times*, 17 September 1830.
[80] Connor, 'British Frontier Warfare Logistics and the 'Black Line', p. 149.
[81] *Hobart Town Courier*, 25 September 1830.
[82] *Copies of all* correspondence, p. 72.; Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines*, p. 107.
[83] Thomas Scott Papers, Mitchell Library, Sydney, MS A1055. Arthur to George Frankland, 25 October 1830.

line west to the Meander River near Quamby Bluff, and to terminate in the south at East Bay (Eaglehawk) Neck.[84] It was accompanied by a detailed set of instructions on the composition of the various detachments and their commanders, and of the manner in which they should move, including the lighting of signal fires, the methods of reporting progress, and particularly, the establishment of twenty-seven supply depots, to be under the charge of the Land Survey Department and the Commissary-General. The field officer responsible for coordinating the enormous volume of supplies of food, clothing, footwear and ammunition to these depots was assistant surveyor Thomas Scott, with help from surveyors John Helder Wedge and William Sharland. Only two men in every five were to be armed.[85]

Oatlands, in the centre of the Midlands, became the major supply depot for this large body of men, with enormous quantities of rations and stores delivered there by the farmers and millers of the district and by the merchants of Hobart Town, all of whom benefited financially from the campaign. A measure of the vast stores delivered to Oatlands is found in a note of stores at Aubin's Hut on 30 October 1830, where 30,000 rations, 1,000 pairs of shoes and seventeen baskets of tobacco were delivered.[86] While the site of the Oatlands depot was not recorded, it was most likely at the police post, where adequate space for storage and movement of transport carts was available in the police paddock. Oatlands, even in the absence of many permanent buildings, would have been a bustling place, with tents and other temporary accommodation for those involved in supplying the Lieutenant-Governor's volunteer army. Of the many suppliers, one farmer in particular profited handsomely from his deliveries to the depot. Robert Jones' farm at Four Square Gallows in the Lower Marshes was west of the depot, but conveniently located for deliveries to other locations, such as Bothwell. On 3 October 1830, Jones delivered 2000 pounds of flour, half to Betts' farm, and half to the Hollow Tree Bottom depot near Jericho. The next day he delivered eight hundred pounds of flour and six hundred pounds of meat to Lovely Banks, for supply to the Oatlands depot. On 7 October 1830, Jones delivered another ton of flour to Watt's Mill at Hollow Tree Bottom. Assistant

[84] Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines*, 'Field Plan of the Movements of the Military', end papers.
[85] *Copies of all correspondence*, pp. 66-70. It is of interest that the junior assistant surveyor in the Department, James Erskine Calder, was apparently not involved in the campaign.
[86] Scott Papers, A1055.

Commissary-General Moodie expressed grave concern at the existence of unused flour at Watt's Mill, and sought an accounting of all deliveries. Thomas Scott's rambling explanation seemed to have satisfied (if not confused) Moodie, as no further query was raised.[87] However, the enquiries were an indication of suspected waste and pilferage of the enormous quantities of stores supplied. Other major suppliers of flour and meat included Isaac Solomon and John Allan, the latter sending flour and meat sufficient for one hundred men for seven days to police magistrate Thomas Anstey at Oatlands, as the person in charge of the field police and civilian activities during the campaign. These supplies were then carted to a depot at Michael Howe's Marsh, together with large quantities of tea and flour.[88]

The campaign commenced as scheduled on 7 October 1830. In a despatch dated 20 November 1830 to Sir George Murray, Secretary of State for the Colonies, Arthur briefly described the progress of the Line to that date, noting that it had commenced on a one-hundred-and-twenty mile front. He also noted that the line marched

> in extended order, each party keeping its proper course and distance from its neighbours, *as well as the nature of the country would admit*, in which they were assisted on the advance by the discharge of musketry, by bugle, and by every party repeatedly calling out its number.[89]

As well, signal fires were lit on prominent points for reference at night. One in particular, that on Maloney's Sugarloaf near Little Swanport, was lit by John Danvers as early as 1 October, and kept burning for almost the duration of the campaign. The Colonel Commanding considered 'this is important as the sugarloaf is most conspicuous'.[90] From the strategy adopted, it was clear that the prime objective was to drive the Aborigines onto the Peninsula rather than attempt to capture them *en route*. The constant noise of firearms and bugles, the visual appearance of red-coated troops, and, as noted by Jorgenson, the impenetrable nature of the scrub in the Eastern Tiers, (which resulted in the Line disintegrating into single files along accessible tracks),

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[87] Scott Papers, A1055.
[88] Scott Papers.
[89] *Copies of all correspondence*, p. 72. My emphasis.
[90] Scott papers, A1055. Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines*, p. 81. John Danvers was an experienced bushman, and guide of a roving party under Jorgen Jorgenson. He complained that Maloney's Sugarloaf was not the highest point in the area. A convict transported for life, he was employed by Thomas Anstey as a 'Special Constable' at Oatlands for three years from 19 January 1829. E. Fitzsymonds, *A Looking-Glass for Tasmania: Letters, Petitions and Other Manuscripts Relating to Van Diemen's Land 1808-1845*, Adelaide: Sullivan's Cove, 1980, pp. 163, 164

meant that the quarry was easily able to pass to the rear through the troops, and evade being driven forward.[91] The rough going resulted in the men's shoes wearing out at a rapid rate, and 2,000 extra pairs were obtained from Hobart Town, one hundred pairs alone being delivered to the Prosser's Bay depot by the ship *Tamar* on 30 October 1830.[92] Claims of sightings of the Aborigines in front of the Line were made, most proving false or exaggerated, Arthur admitting that 'no single party discovered any traces of the Natives' other than 'an assemblage of their huts'. At one point, the Line remained stationary, for 'about fourteen days.'[93] Melville, in declaring the campaign 'a most complete failure, as any reasonable man might have anticipated', noted that 'some four or five troops were killed by accident, whilst but one prisoner of war was brought as a trophy into town, and even this one afterwards escaped into the bush.'[94] Government Order No. 13 of 26 November 1830 advised of the cessation of the campaign, 'the Government unwilling to wish [the volunteers] to extend their service at this juncture, when to remain any longer in the field would prove so detrimental to their private interests'. The Order contained fulsome praise of the efforts of the volunteers and the military, and particularly praised the work of Surveyor-General George Frankland and his officers. While noting that the campaign was not 'attended with the expected success', the Order assured the settlers that the 'most active measures will be continued'. In an odd reference – apparently in a nod to rumours that had been circulated – the Order did not 'consider it prudent to detail any future operations in public', as the 'Lieutenant-Governor feels a strong persuasion that there are white men among the natives'. The campaign was actually abandoned on 24th, along the shortened line from Sorell to the mouth of the Sandpit River. Arthur apparently never made any attempt to ascertain whether any Aborigines retreated onto Tasman's Peninsula, harbouring the belief 'which many entertained of the Natives having escaped'; and the campaign ended abruptly in Henry Melville's words 'an extraordinary manner'. Melville was indicating the concern of the settlers at such a

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[91] Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines*, pp.106-109; Connor, 'British Frontier Warfare', p. 154; Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 489 – 'they saw the soldiers and the fires ... they had no trouble in getting away', quoting Woolaytoopinneyer. Melville claimed that Captain Edward Dumaresq 'instead of closing on the proposed line, advanced his men on the main road from Brighton to Pittwater' – *The History of Van Diemen's Land*, p. 120.

[92] Scott Papers, A1055; Connor, 'British Frontier Warfare', pp. 154, 155; Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 315. Discarded shoes were seen by Robinson near Pitt Water on 15 January 1831.

[93] Melville, *History of Van Diemen's Land*, pp.113, 114; Copies *of all correspondence*, p. 73.

[94] Melville, *The History of Van Diemen's Land*, p. 117; West claimed that 'two persons only were captured' – *History of Tasmania*, p. 300; Fenton claimed 'The only result was the capture of one man and one boy', by Walpole's roving party. *The History of Tasmania*, p. 110. See also n. 96.

'precipitate abandonment' of the campaign, when it appeared likely to achieve some success.[95]

The singular "success" of the campaign came with a clash that the Lieutenant-Governor, in Order No. 13, blamed for the failure to drive the Aborigines onto Tasman's Peninsula. Edward Walpole, a settler a Prosser's Bay, led a roving party of ten men who ambushed a 'tribe' of 'near 70 individuals' at a 'favourite crossing place of the blacks over the Prosser's River'. Walpole and his party claimed two Aborigines were shot, and a man and a boy 'of about fifteen years of age' were captured.[96] Arthur considered that,

> but for [the Aborigines'] untimely dispersion by a Party who too hastily attacked them before a sufficient Force could arrive to capture them, the whole [campaign] would probably have been crowned with success.[97]

Apart from offering an excuse for what was seen as a failed campaign, Arthur's statement carried his realisation that the remnant numbers of *Mairremmener* were very small. Walpole's report of a body of seventy Aborigines was the only eyewitness report of their substantial presence in front of the Line during the campaign, and taken in the context of the events that followed over the next twelve months, is possibly an indication of the real numbers of *Mairremmener* remaining at the time. The evidence for this is found in Robinson's journals, when, on 22 October 1831, he discussed the Line campaign with Woollaytoopinneya, the *Lairmairrener* woman accompanying him on the Big River mission. Referring to Walpole's attack, she told Robinson that

> there was both people together – the Big River and the Oyster Bay – and that it rained very hard and they had purposed stopping there two days ... that of the two natives taken, one belonged to the Big River and one to the Oyster Bay.[98]

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[95] *Hobart Town Gazette*, 26 November 1830. The reports of white men with Aboriginal bands was widely reported without any firm evidence – see for example the *Hobart Town Courier*, 18 September 1830; *Copies of all correspondence*, p. 74; *Melville*, p. 117. West noted 'Those who had condemned the plan now censured its precipitate abandonment; they said that hundreds of blacks were enclosed when the troops were withdrawn.' *The History of Tasmania*, p. 300.

[96] Melville, *The History of Van Diemen's Land*, p.112, quoting from the *Hobart Town Courier*. The crossing place was probably Devil's Royals Ford. The man was Weltepellemeener of the *Lairmairrener*, the boy Ronekeennarener, band unknown - see Appendix 3. Bonwick claimed that the man's name was 'Nichay Manick'. Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, p. 164. Melville (n. 95) was wrong. There was no escape; both captives were eventually exiled in 1832.

[97] *Hobart Town Gazette*, 27 November 1830.

[98] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 489. However, in a report to Thomas Anstey dated 21 February 1830, Jorgenson claimed that 'the strength and number of the Aborigines are much greater than was commonly supposed, for at this moment the number now hovering on both sides of the Big River, and the settlement of the Lower Clyde, can be computed at no less than two hundred, independent of females and children'. Jorgenson to Anstey, AOT CSO1/1/320, p.367. The number appears to be an exaggeration aimed at supporting the efficacy and continuation of the roving parties.

Success or dismal failure? The viceroy's actions assessed

Far from being considered a success, the Line campaign was excoriated by contemporary and subsequent commentators as an expensive and farcical failure. The cost, estimated between £30,000 and £35,000, was sarcastically criticized by Henry Melville as 'public money which had been hoarded up uselessly in the Treasury', and that the public addresses of congratulations by 'His Excellency's friends' lead him to believe that 'the whole body of Colonists had turned crazy in consequence of the complete failure of this grand undertaking.'[99] John West referred to 'the original impossibility of the plan [of the campaign, and] the indolence or incaution of those who carried it out [which] had exposed the government to more than ridicule.' He described the campaign as 'mimicry of war'.[100] James Calder, commenting in 1872 in an obituary for John Helder Wedge, declared:

> Colonel Arthur opened his celebrated but silly campaign against the blacks, hoping to drive these acute and crafty savages into his snares ...[Wedge] I believe privately expostulated with [Arthur] against engaging in so wild and hopeless an enterprise.[101]

Even more scathing criticism appeared in a private letter written by Gilbert Robertson, leader of a roving party, to Thomas Scott, the senior assistant to the Surveyor-General during the campaign. Robertson, referring to the campaign plan prepared by Frankland and approved by Arthur, declared that it was 'the concoction of a shallow minded schoolboy, no man of sense could for one moment believe ... that such a wild scheme should be proposed'.[102] On the other hand, a measure of praise came from Arthur's supporter, Jorgen Jorgenson, who noted:

> although the Line did not succeed in capturing any of the Aborigines we must consider the grand movement in connection with the labours of [Robinson's missions], and then it will be clearly seen that the success of the latter was entirely owing to the demonstration of the large number of men in the field under the immediate command of Sir George Arthur.[103]

There is evidence that Jorgenson was closer to the mark than Arthur's critics. Robinson's journals noted that, while on the mission to the north east in November 1830, the woman Luggenemenener of the *Plangermairreenner* (Ben Lomond) People

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[99] Melville, p.120.
[100] West, *The History of Tasmania*, pp. 296, 300.
[101] *The Mercury*, 29 September 1872. Calder was, of course, an officer of the Land Survey Department during the campaign – the Department praised for its work by the Lieutenant-Governor, as noted above. Wedge, however, was apparently less critical in public – see Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians,* pp. 178, 179.
[102] Thomas Scott papers, MS 1055. Melville, Calder and Robertson were all staunch critics of Arthur, Melville writing the above from gaol in 1835, where he had been sent for criminal libel of the Lieutenant-Governor.
[103] Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines*, p. 109.

told Robinson that 'in consequence of their being so many soldiers in the bush ... she was afraid they would shoot [her band]', and she had taken them to John Batman's property for safety, but had later run away. Robinson went on to assert that he knew by name of seventy Aborigines still in the bush, and these were 'all that remained of their tribes, and comprise all the aborigines in a line from the Tamar to the Derwent.'[104]

Recent commentary on the success or otherwise of the Line campaign has taken a more favourable view of its effectiveness. The objectives that were set for the campaign by the Lieutenant-Governor were to either capture all Aborigines driven before the Line or contain them on Tasman's Peninsula, or alternatively, to permanently expel them from the settled districts.[105] In respect of the *Mairremmener* People, the second objective was achieved in large measure. As Henry Melville conceded, 'For some little time after the grand movement, scarcely a native was seen or heard.'[106] The *Mairremmener* remnants had retreated onto the Central Plateau, as evidenced by the attacks upon settlers that took place in the year after the campaign. Fewer in number (probably reflecting the greatly diminished numbers in the agglomerated bands), almost all were on the lower Plateau, at such places as St.Patrick's Plains, Lake Sorell, Native Hut Creek, Bashan Plains and Michael Howe's Marsh. Later in the year, a few attacks took place in the Midlands and on the east coast; the most significant being in October 1831, when the unsuccessful attempt to trap the remnant bands on Freycinet Peninsula took place. The vast majority of clashes occurred outside *Mairremmener* country, particularly in the north and north east. The Colonial Office expressed qualified approval, the Secretary of State noting that 'your operations have not altogether failed in their object.'[107] From a political viewpoint, the campaign was a success for Arthur inasmuch as the pressure on the government to act had been removed, and his reputation as a strong and active administrator had been enhanced.

The campaign was also a success from the point of view of the settlers and millers who supplied the commissariat with flour and meat; and the Hobart Town and

[104] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 276.
[105] *Copies of all correspondence*, p. 65.
[106] Melville, *The History of Van Diemen's Land*, p. 120.
[107] *Copies of all correspondence*, p. 75, quoting Lord Goderich.

Launceston merchants who supplied tea, sugar, tobacco, footwear, ammunition and other goods. The small and flagging economy of Van Diemen's Land was revitalised by the injection of the huge sum provided from the colonial treasury. Farmers such as Robert Jones of Four Square Gallows did exceptionally well – in John West's words 'the settlers saw, with pleasure, their produce rise in the neighbourhood of this formidable band, to twice its recent value'.[108]

In an oblique way, the other major beneficiaries of the Line Campaign were the remnant *Mairremmener* People.[109] Martial law ended with the proclamation of the end of the campaign, and the *status quo* prevailed; that is, the People were once more British subjects under the care and protection of the Crown. As noted above, the *Mairremmener* had been placed in a state of rebellion by their failure to obey the proclamation of 1828 expelling them from the settled districts, and by their escalating attacks upon the settlers. These attacks were, by 1830, seen as acts of war.[110] The legality of the expulsion proclamation was questionable, even though approved by the Colonial Office.[111] It would appear that the Lieutenant-Governor carefully and purposely crafted his proclamations to create the situation where summary justice and deadly force could legally be used against the *Mairremmener* in a form acceptable to his masters at the Colonial Office. With the failure to capture the Aborigines during the campaign, and the need to again observe the British government's directives for the treatment of indigenous subjects, the problem remaining for Arthur was then the capture and exile of the Aborigines without further bloodshed. Help was at hand: an unusual missionary was about to come to his aid.

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[108] West, *The History of Tasmania*, p.295; Scott papers, MS A1055.

[109] Brian Plomley claimed that 'the [Line Campaign] was a success ... because it made the few [Aborigines] who were still alive realise that the only way to preserve their lives was to give themselves up.' Plomley, 'Aborigines and Governors', *Bulletin of the Centre for Tasmanian Historical Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1990-1991, p. 17.

[110] Apart from the opinions of the settlers, and ultimately the Executive Council, as noted above, a persuasive opinion to the point is that of the United States Supreme Court case of *Montoya v. United States [1901]* 180 U.S. 261, quoted in *Virginia Law Review*, Vol. 7, No. 7, (April 1921), p. 554:

> 'The depredations of a band of Indians, as hostile acts against the government and all settlers with whom they came in contact, constituted evidence of an act of war.'

[111] Blackstone, on the question of the right of the Crown to banish a subject, said, 'no power on earth, except the authority of Parliament, can send any subject of England *out of* the land against his will, no, not even a criminal.' *Commentaries*, Vol. 1 (15th. ed) p. 137. The question here is whether such rule applied to internal exile or banishment. The issue, including the history of the common law respecting banishment, is canvassed in the modern case of *Queen v Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth Office ex parte Bancoult* [2000] EWHC Admin 413 (3rd November 2000).

Chapter seven

The 'Great Conciliator': capture and exile

It was an awful day for the natives when they trusted the good faith of the Government, which seized them as prisoners directly they got them, and consigned them to the Straits islands, where in a dozen years or so, four-fifths of them died ... Robinson ... was often heard to speak regretfully about the promises he made them on behalf of the Government, being so faithlessly kept.

James Erskine Calder, 1875

The last foray: the Freycinet 'line campaign'

The settlers on the east coast and in the Midlands had good reason to be pleased with the results of the Line campaign, as evidenced by the small number of clashes that took place in those locations during the early part of 1831. From September to December, only seven attacks were made by the *Mairremmener* bands: at Pitt Water, Cross Marsh, Brushy Plains and the Eastern Tiers. There were no murders, but four convict servants were wounded and a few huts were plundered. Settlers on the lower Central Plateau had fewer reasons to applaud the campaign, especially in the first nine months of 1831, when fourteen attacks took place, mostly concentrated in the Bothwell district, with four murders, including a woman – Jane Kennedy – at Native Hut Creek in June.[1] The numbers of Aboriginal attackers were generally low, fifty being the largest band reported.

The timing of the attacks throughout *Mairremmener* country was unusual as it was obvious that the remnant bands had wintered on the Plateau; however, a return to the east coast in September coincided with the beginning of the egging season at Moulting Lagoon. As the result of that migration and its observation by the settlers, a vigorous attempt was made to capture the remaining Aborigines by entrapment on the Freycinet Peninsula in October 1831. On the 13th, it was reported that an attack took place at Alexander Reid's property at Great Swanport, where his hut was plundered and food and firearms taken.[2] It would appear that the report was mistaken, or that John Lyne's property had also been plundered.[3] In any event, there was no doubt that a substantial band of Aborigines had arrived in the district. The attacks served as an

[1] Plomley, *Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, pp. 97-100.
[2] Plomley, p. 99.
[3] *Colonial Times*, 23 November 1831. Letter from John Lyne.

alarm, and a combined party of some one hundred settlers, soldiers and field constables gathered north of the isthmus connecting Freycinet Peninsula with the mainland with the intention of penning the band of Aborigines, thought to have numbered about forty, on the Peninsula, a well-known camping place – *Rowwerrerner* – for the *Mayyerlower* band, and where the marauding Aborigines were supposed to have retreated.[4] The instigation for the movement came from George Meredith, a leading settler in the district, and whose property 'Redbanks' was closest to the Peninsula. Meredith had been the victim of numerous attacks since settling on the property in 1821.[5] A line was formed across the narrowest part of the isthmus, probably near the present site of Coles Bay, fires were lit and the cordon maintained for about two weeks. The scheme was abandoned after it became obvious that the Aborigines, if any had been present, had escaped. Bonwick claimed that '[the Aborigines] dashed by the fires and the guards, and gained the dark forest beyond in safety.'[6]

The members of the small band which had carried out the Swanport attacks were in no hurry to leave the district, but were once more heading inland. On 6 November an attack was reported on William Bunster's property at Maloneys Sugarloaf, where convict servant John Collett was wounded. On 24 November the stock keeper's hut on David Lord's property at St. Peters Pass was plundered, and three dogs were taken. Finally, at Green Ponds on 4 December 1831, a reported four Aborigines attacked the stock keepers on George Story's property, and six attacked Joseph Brotherton's property, wounding a servant named Buckley. All these attacks took place in the vicinity of the Aboriginal roads heading west. The attack on the 4th was the last reported on the east coast and the Midlands.[7] The activities of the roving parties under the command of Jorgen Jorgenson were continued, however, with Jorgenson, in February 1831, reporting sighting of smoke from fires in the 'Western

[4] There is a large rock shelter and shell midden at Fisheries Creek, which Brown considered had first been occupied 'some 3,400 years ago'. Brown, *Aboriginal Archaeological Sites in Eastern Tasmania*, p. 63.
[5] Letter, Meredith to Arthur, AOT, CSO 1/1/316/7578/1001; Nyman, *East Coasters*, p. 113.
[6] Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, pp. 179, 180. For a general report on this minor "campaign", see *Hobart Town Courier*, 30 October, 5 & 26 November 1831; *Colonial Times*, 23 November 1831. A correspondent to the *Courier* on 26 November claimed that there were eighty-four men in the cordon party, a reputed thirty Aborigines, and 'it is singular that no individual can say that any were seen'.
[7] Plomley, *Aboriginal/Settler Clash*, p.100; *Hobart Town Courier*, 10 December 1831.

Bluff ... to the Shannon Tier ... a considerable distance from the settlements.' There is no record of Aborigines captured or killed by the parties during the year.[8]

An unusual missionary: George Augustus Robinson's conciliatory missions

George Augustus Robinson began his third conciliatory mission to the Aborigines from Campbell Town in the Midlands on 15 October 1831. His objective was to persuade the Big River 'tribe' to surrender.[9] His party consisted of his son George, convict servants Alexander McGeary, Joseph Maclaine, William Stansfield Joseph Platt, Charles Sterling and Richard Tyrell, together with thirteen Aborigines. Three were *Mairremmener*-speakers – Kickerterpoller (Black Tom) of the *Poredareme*, Woollaytoopinneyer of the *Laimairremener* and Tanleeboneyer (Sall) of the *Murwinyelooner*; individuals who would be needed if and when any contact were made with the quarry. The other ten were from diverse parts of the island: Mannalargenna, an important and respected man, was from the north east, as were Eumarrah (Kanneherlargenner), Maulboyheener (Timmy) and Tarenootairrer (Tibb). Woorrady, Pagerly and Trugernanna were *Nuenonne* from Bruny Island. Druerertattenanne (Cranky Dick) was *Plangermairreenner* from Ben Lomond; Lacklay (Jemmie) was *Punnilerpanner* from Port Sorell; and Tunnermennerwait (Peevay) was *Parperloihener* from Robbins Island, off the north west coast. Many of these people had accompanied Robinson on his earlier missions, and some were to remain with him. The party had one horse and numerous dogs.

Robinson had proved to be an inspired choice as leader of the expeditions to capture the Aborigines. From relatively humble beginnings as an immigrant builder in Hobart Town, in March 1829 he had been appointed superintendent of the Aboriginal establishment on Bruny Island, where his efforts earned the confidence of Lieutenant-Governor Arthur, notwithstanding the high mortality rate among his charges. He had almost immediately begun compiling a vocabulary of the *Nuenonne* language.[10] During this time Robinson noted visits to Bruny Island by Aboriginal bands from the west coast, and in July 1829, began to formulate a plan for an expedition to Port

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[8] Jorgensen to Anstey, AOT CSO1/1/320, p. 305.
[9] Plomley pointed out that the Lieutenant-Governor, writing to Robinson before the commencement of this mission, stated that 'the great object should be – the capture of the Big River Tribe! And to this Mr Robinson's attention is particularly drawn as a means beyond any other of furthering the aboriginal mission.' *Friendly Mission*, p. 482.
[10] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 58.

Davey in order to make known Arthur's 'humane intentions', and to encourage the Aborigines to return with him the Bruny establishment where his plan to 'civilize' and 'instruct in the principles of Christianity' could be put into effect.[11] Having received approval to carry out the expedition, he set out overland from Recherche Bay with a party of Aborigines and convict servants on 2 February 1830, and spent the next eight months in the bush, following the southern, western and northern coastlines of the island, terminating at George Town at the mouth of the Tamar River on 1 October 1830. During that time he made contact with numerous Aboriginal bands, and was informed of the treatment that had been dealt the Aborigines by servants of the Van Diemen's Land Company, particularly the events surrounding the murders at Cape Grim. This epic and arduous expedition through the most difficult terrain on the island must rank as one of the most successful in the history of white exploration of Australia. The distance traversed was enormous – about half the perimeter of the island: that is, over 1,500 miles, not allowing for the inland deviations made *en route*. The success of this great feat was the result of Robinson's use of the knowledge of his Aboriginal companions, particularly their knowledge of the *Markenner* – the Aboriginal roads – and their knowledge of culture and language. The experience was to stand Robinson in good stead for his future missions. He had, wittingly or otherwise, adopted Degerando's dictum for the study of man: he had lived and experienced the culture of the Peoples, and he had attempted to learn their languages.

On the* Markenner: *expedition to the Big River tribe, October-December 1831

The Big River expedition headed south from Campbell Town to an eastern point below the Little Swanport River, an area well-known to many of the Aborigines with Robinson, and the route of the *Markenner* heading west from Oyster Bay (Platt and Sterling had been left behind). The party followed the road –'an excellent sheepwalk' – to a camp south of Oatlands, stopping overnight to avoid the possible attentions of settlers who may have been inclined to attack the Aborigines in the party, Robinson noting that 'if [the settlers] were to hear or see my natives and not observe me or my son and the other white man ... they might attack us at our encampment and surrounding us fire upon us and destroy us all.' Travelling west through Jericho, the party followed the track 'constantly frequented by the natives',

[11] Plomley, *Friendly* Mission, p. 56.

crossing over the Clyde River at Bothwell, and arriving at the Shannon River 'by the usual track'. Passing over James Ross's property, the party camped on the banks of the Ouse River. Sheep and cattle were seen on the plains. Following George Espie's cart tracks, the party then forded the river and entered the Bashan Plains, heading for the northern shores of Lake Echo, which they reached on 8 November. Two days later, near Brady's Sugarloaf (having travelled south-west), Woollaytoopinneyer retrieved and surrendered to Robinson four shotguns and four muskets, together with powder and powder flasks. One shotgun was that which belonged to Captain Bartholomew Thomas, who had been murdered at Port Sorell. The evidence of the concealed guns and the recent firing of the country convinced Robinson that this was the 'chief resort of those ferocious aborigines known as the Big River Tribe'. During the next few days the party 'met with numerous native huts and the remains of native villages'. In several of the huts Robinson observed 'several rude drawings, circles, broad arrows and other hieroglyphical figures representing men and women'.[12]

Over the next six weeks Robinson and his party wandered throughout the Central Plateau, passing the southern shore of the Great Lake and heading north to Dry's Bluff, then taking a southerly route below the Western Tiers to Arthurs Lake. At times they followed the smoke from Aboriginal fires and other traces of the presence of Aboriginal bands, and regularly used the Aboriginal roads.[13] They examined the country around the Lagoon of Islands and Lakes Crescent and Sorell, and occasionally came across shepherds; two of Jacobina Burn's men were encountered on the Shannon River on 4 December.[14] By 26 December 1831 the party had returned to the northern shore of Lake Echo, where they camped while Robinson sent men to Espie's hut on the Bashan Plains for supplies and despatches. He wrote his own journals and messages while determining his further actions, as he was 'Greatly at a loss how to proceed.' His men returned with a despatch from the Colonial Secretary, in which Robinson was advised that Alexander McKay (who was the leader of an expedition sent to capture Aborigines in the north west), had reported the presence of the Big River tribe, consisting of about fifteen persons, in the Surrey

[12] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, pp. 500-514. Espie had most likely followed the Aboriginal road.
[13] On 24 November 1831, at the Shannon Point south of the Great Lake, Robinson noted 'The road I am travelling is the native track.' *Friendly Mission*, p. 529.
[14] p. 539. Jacobina Burns' property 'Ellengowan' was situated on the Clyde River, under the Boomer Tier, and north of Hamilton. The presence of Burns' stock further north on unoccupied country is an indication of the practice of transhumance.

Hills. They were 'expected to return to the Ouse'. This information confirmed that supplied by Robinson's Aboriginal companions, who had told him the people they were seeking had 'gone to the *Pyenremairremene* to see the old chief Tongelongter, but that they would return.'[15]

The Colonial Secretary's despatch had urged Robinson to act promptly in his pursuit, and on 28 December the party headed to the Bashan Plains on a report of a sighting of an Aboriginal woman. No contact was made, and the party then headed north from Lake Echo, camping on Hansome Flat, having 'descried the native smoke in a westerly direction'. Mannalargenna claimed he had fought the *Lairmairrener* (Big River) People at this location, and they had 'run away up the hill'. Eumarrah and Woollaytoopinneyer returned from searching, and advised Robinson that they had located the tracks of the *Lairmairrener* who 'had come from the Platform Bluff [Skittleball Hill]', the eminence immediately north of the camp. The following day Robinson took his party south westwards in pursuit, and came upon the remnant *Mairremmener* bands – sixteen men, nine women and a child, led by 'two celebrated chiefs of the Big River and Oyster Bay tribes [Montpeliatter and Tongelongter].'[16]

A conference with the Lieutenant-Governor: capture and exile

On 14 January 1832, the *Hobart Town Courier* reported:

> Mr Robinson ... made his triumphant entry into town with his party of blacks, amounting to 40 in all, including 14 of his domesticated companions, with the 26 of which the Oyster Bay and Big river mobs were composed. They walked very leisurely along the road, followed by a large pack of dogs, and were received by the inhabitants ... with the most lively curiosity and delight.

The *Courier* went on to claim that 'they had agreed to accompany [Robinson] to the Governor, who Mr Robinson promised would readily comply with all their wishes and supply all their wants.'[17] The rival newspaper, *The Colonial Times*, was less generous, reporting that,

> A more grotesque appearance we have seldom witnessed, than the arrival of these natives ... if report says true, the view with which they were induced to accompany Mr Robinson, was,

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[15] pp. 566, 583. As Plomley noted, 'There is an easy route from [the Surrey Hills] to the Great Lake plateau *via* the headwaters of the Mersey River and the Middlesex Plains'. p. 584 n.93.
[16] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, pp. 566-572. 'Platform Bluff' is now known as Skittleball Hill. It is situated south-west of the Great Lake, and Lake Fergus lies directly to the west, Lake Echo to the south. Its elevation is 4,000 feet, and the summit provides an excellent aspect of the surrounding countryside over 360°.
[17] *Hobart Town Courier*, 14 January 1832.

> that they should seek redress from the Governor [but] were bent on spearing His Excellency, provided he did not grant them the redress they were seeking.'[18]

Both papers expressed qualified satisfaction at the capture of the remnant *Mairremmenener*, but differed in their reasoning. The *Courier* considered that the

> removal of these blacks will be of essential benefit both to themselves and the colony. The large tracts of pasture that have so long been deserted owing to their murderous attacks on the shepherds and the stock huts, will now be available, and a very sensible relief will be afforded to the flocks of sheep that had been withdrawn from them, and pent up on inadequate ranges of pasture – a circumstance which indeed has tended materially to impoverish the flocks and keep up the price of butcher's meat.

That claim was heavy with the discourse of colonialism, and parallels the discourse of earlier times, such as that of the Highland Clearances, where similar justifications were used. The *Colonial Times* had less lofty commentary, carping:

> On the whole the arrival of these natives in Hobart Town cannot but be highly satisfactory to the Colonists, and although some imagine that Mr Robinson has been too well paid, still on such meritorious undertakings we are not of that party who would calculate about pounds, shillings, and pence.[19]

The capture of the twenty-six Aborigines had indeed been a triumph for Robinson, certainly in his own eyes, as he compiled a separate report to the Lieutenant-Governor outside his journal of the events leading up to the meeting on the Central Plateau, noting that' 'I cannot describe the difficulties to which I was continually exposed in this harassing and arduous undertaking.' He related the circumstances that lead to the agreement for the surrender, including the Aborigines' 'considerable astonishment on hearing me address them in their own tongue'. The exact nature of the promises Robinson made to them was vague, and seemed to be limited to 'a conference with the Lieut Govr [who] will be sure to redress all their grievances'. Whether or not Robinson had advised them of the intention to exile all the Peoples permanently on the Great (Flinders) Island is not clear, as he only reported that 'They were willing however to accept the offers of the government'. As the party set out for Bothwell *en route* to Hobart Town, the Aborigines led Robinson to a 'newly erected native hut', on a thickly wooded hill, where 'six stand of firearms consisting of three excellent fowling pieces and three muskets ... primed and loaded and in good condition' were surrendered to him. At his request, the Aborigines were to bear the arms for surrender directly to the Lieutenant-Governor. On reaching

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[18] *Colonial Times*, 11 January 1832. In contrast to James Ross, the publisher of the *Courier*, Henry Melville, was a trenchant critic of Lieutenant-Governor Arthur and his administration.
[19] *Hobart Town Courier*, 14 January 1832; *Colonial Times*, 11 January 1832.

Bothwell on 4 January 1832, Robinson was given a despatch from the Colonial Secretary, which required him to 'forthwith bring [the Aborigines] to Hobart Town ... Every possible degree of humanity is to be exercised towards them, but at the same time every precaution should be taken to prevent their escape.'[20]

Apart from naming the two 'chiefs' Montpeliatter and Tongelongter, the names of other captives were not given; a not-unusual attitude towards the Aborigines, who were often simply referred to by an English name considered appropriate by the settlers – an example of the attitude of invisibility noted above. From the records of the Flinders Island settlement it would appear that at least eleven of the captives were *Lairmairremener* (Big River) People; nine others were from Midlands and east coast bands, and two were from other bands, as follows (m = male, f = female):

From the *Lairmairremener* –

Montpeliatter (m)
Meenerkerpackerminer (m)
Moomereriner (m)
Nooerrer (m)
Nowweeple (f)
Ronene (f)
Woolleyertidpunyer (f)
Drierlergenerminer (Queen Elizabeth)
Drunameliyer (Caroline)
Druemerterpunner (Count Alexander)
Netaweeartheer (Lucy)

From the *Larmairremener* (Prosser River) –

Kallerromter (Tippoo)
Pootappellureyanner (m)

From the *Poredareme* (Oyster Bay) –

Tongelongter (Governor)

From the *Marwemairrener* and *Tyrrernotepanner* (Campbell Town) –

Ningernooputener (m)
Parwarehetar (Lawyer)
Karnebutcher (f)

From the *Tyreddeme* (Maria Island) –

Nubelennenmer (m)

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[20] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, pp.570-573.

From the *Pallitorre* (Western Tiers) –

Numbloote (Jenny)

From the *Leetermairremener* (St.Patricks Head) –

Pamarooner (m)

From the *Mayyerlower* (Freycinet Peninsula) –

Larkumpinerungerner (Pinerungerner) (m)

From the *Pydarererme* (Tasman's Peninsula) –

Poetigwerlayde (m)

Pootappellureyanner, Larkumpinerungerner and Poetigwerlayde were old men, all known as band elders and leaders in the early 1820s. Kallerromter was almost certainly an elder and leader who had actively participated in the clashes with settlers in the past few years, and perhaps was a successor to Kickerterpoller.[21] While Robinson, in his report, implied that the terms of surrender, including the exile to the Bass Strait Islands, was conveyed to the captives and consented to by them, it is highly unlikely that any such agreement was reached. In his Flinders Island journals on 21 March 1837, Robinson noted that 'King William [Tongelongter] and King George [Druleerpar] both have importuned me to leave this place of sickness, and saying "what do you mean to stay till all the black men are dead?"'[22] Tongelongter's understanding of the agreement made with Robinson on the Central Plateau on that fateful New Year's Eve, 1831, may have been reflected in a report Robinson made to the government in July 1838, where he claimed:

> In the stipulations made to the aborigines it was guaranteed by me on behalf of the government that they should be protected and cared for generally, and that as far as practicable they were in the summer months *under proper protection* to occasionally *visit their native districts* ... I confess I have frequently deplored the non-fulfilment of this part of the conditions, the more so as in all my dealings with the natives I have been scrupulously exact in keeping faith and have found it extremely painful and unpleasant to refuse compliance when importuned to carry the original intention into effect.[23]

While there is no direct indication that this particular provision was specifically made for the *Mairremmener* captives, it is a reasonable assumption that it was, in order to obtain their willing surrender.

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[21] Plomley, *Friendly Mission, Weep in Silence.* There is no certainty of the correctness of this record, particularly of the old men being present.

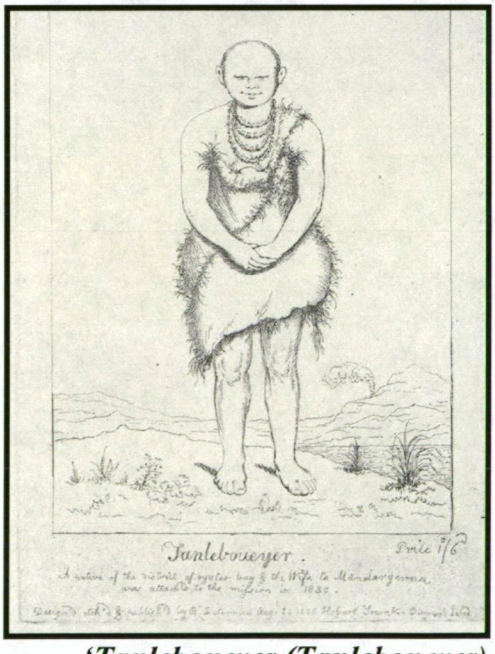
[22] Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, p. 432.

[23] Pp. 747, 748.

'Mr G. A. Robinson (in his bush dress) - who was appointed by His Majesty's colonial government missionary to the aboriginal tribes of V. D. Land for removing them which he affected without force or bloodshed.'

Benjamin Duterrau, nd, ca. 1835

State Library of New South Wales

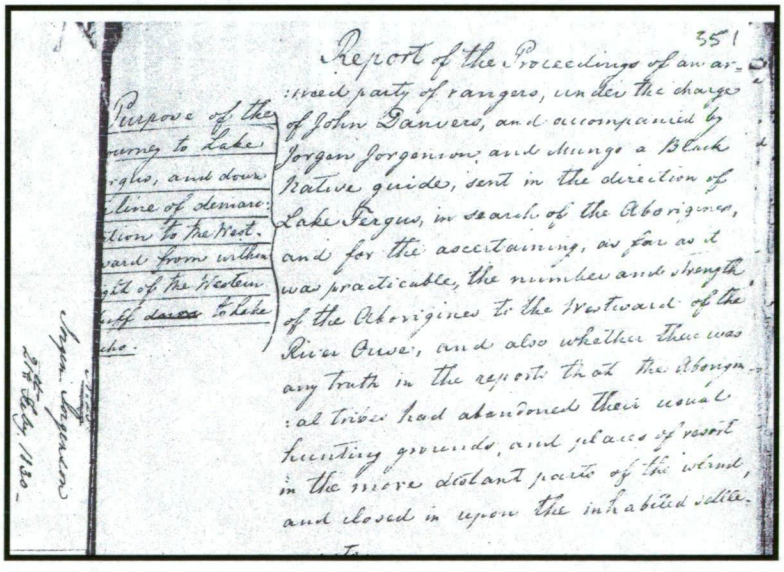


'Tanlebouеyer (Tanleboneyer) A native of the district of Oyster Bay & the wife of Manalargerna was attach'd to the mission in 1830.'

Benjamin Duterrau, nd. ca. 1835

State Library of New South Wales

Rock shelter and midden, The Fisheries, Freycinet Peninsula
Known as *Rowwerrerner*, the Peninsula was a regular camp for the *Mayyerlower* band of the *Mairremmener* People
Photo: G. K. Calder, March 2007



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Report of the Proceedings of an armed party of rangers, under the charge of John Danvers, and accompanied by Jorgan Jorgenson, and Mungo a Black Native guide, sent in the direction of Lake Fergus, in search of the Aborigines, and for the ascertaining, as far as it was practicable, the number and strength of the Aborigines to the Westward of the River Ouse; and also whether there was any truth in the reports that the Aborigin-al tribes had abandoned their usual hunting grounds, and places of resort in the more distant parts of the island, and closed in upon the inhabited settle-

Purpose of the journey to Lake rglas, and down line of demarc-ation to the West-ward from within ...ill of the Western ...ff down to Lake ...he.

Jorgen Jorgenson

...ff Feby 1830.

Jorgenson's report of a roving party at Lake Fergus in February 1830
Archives Office of Tasmania: CSO1/1/320
The report noted the presence of the guide 'Mungo' – probably Ningernooputener of the *Tyerrernotepanner* band of the Campbell Town district. Lake Fergus was the well-known place on the Central Plateau where many bands regularly congregated

The captives, together with many of Robinson's "companions", were promptly 'persuaded to go on board a vessel in the harbour: they consented, understanding they were to be sent to a place where there is plenty of kangaroo and no work.'[24] The government brig *Tamar* sailed for Great (Flinders) Island on 17 January 1823, a mere two weeks after the capture. A government order of 19 January 1823 expressed the Lieutenant-Governor's 'great satisfaction' at Robinson's success, and relied on his 'confident belief, that there are now no hostile natives remaining in the settled districts'.[25] This belief was subjected to some doubt three weeks later, when the *Hobart Town Courier* 'received several communications, especially one from the Macquarie district, stating that 2 or 3 hostile blacks had been seen in different places ... one in particular had chased a servant of Mr David Burn to the imminent hazard of his life.' On reflection, the paper dismissed the reports as 'barely possible'.[26] The scare campaign was, however, continued by the *Launceston Advertiser* in March, when it reported:

> It is said the Blacks have risen against their white "guard", at Great Island. Neither we, nor any one else expected any other result from the system pursued ...Every opportunity is ... afforded them to mature their plans of revenge; and there can be little doubt that they find themselves compulsively removed from what was really and truly their just and legitimate property and right, they feel instigated to vengeance – their darling propensity.[27]

Nothing came of what was patently a false rumour. The report again reflected the discourse of colonialism.

A practised deceit: Robinson's real objectives

With the capture of the small remnant of the *Mairremmener* Peoples, Robinson had substantially achieved his objectives in respect of that particular socio-linguist group, as set out in his report of February 1831, giving the results of his first mission. Robinson had intended firstly,

> to arrive at a correct estimate of the numerical strength of the aboriginal population and to become acquainted with their moral and political character so as to facilitate the means of conferring with them and making known throughout the whole of their districts to the tribes severally the humane and benevolent intention of the Lieutenant-Governor towards them ;

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[24] *Colonial Times*, 14 January 1832.
[25] *Hobart Town Courier*, 14 January 1832. Robinson noted that the People were first embarked on the Swan River packet until the brig *Tamar* was ready to convey them to Flinders Island. Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, pp. 573, 574. The commentary in the *Courier* again highlighted settlers' prejudices in respect of the Tasmanians.
[26] *Hobart Town Courier*, 11 February, 1832. The report highlighted the nervousness of the settlers on the Central Plateau.
[27] *Launceston Advertiser*, ? March 1832.

Secondly, he intended to carry out some future 'operation' for 'the tranquilizing of the aborigines generally or their entire removal from the island'.[28] Two further missions were required to capture and remove all the remaining Peoples of the socio-linguistic groups of the west coast and the north and to round up the remaining Aboriginal women living with sealers on the Bass Strait islands. However, the Big River mission had removed the major threat, such as it was, to the settled districts of the Central Plateau, the Midlands and the east coast, where the greater portion of the settler population resided. Robinson had gained substantial knowledge of Aboriginal cultures, languages and population, and had formed relationships with important elders and leaders within the various bands. Against those admirable achievements, he had made promises beyond his stated objectives; promises which he undoubtedly knew he could not fulfil, such as the redressing of all the grievances of the *Mairremmener*. The permanent exile from their country was certainly not in their contemplation. In the final analysis, Robinson, for all the understandings of Aboriginal culture he had gained, had failed to appreciated the *raison d'être* of the *Mairremmener* – that is, their nomadic hunting and gathering culture, which when denied them, led to the end of a stable and successful society. It was naïve in the extreme to imagine that a culture which had emerged and adapted over thirty millennia could, in the space of a few years, be subjected to forced acculturation, or even replicated elsewhere, whether through the inculcation of Christianity or any other European cultural practice.

A disrupted culture: the end of Mairremmener *society*

As Plomley has pointed out, the decimation of the *Mairremmener* population resulting in a sad remnant of perhaps fifty survivors could be attributed in part to the deaths through the murderous clashes with the military and settlers, and through the introduction of European diseases, particular minor respiratory infections against which the Aborigines had no natural immunity. The abduction and enslavement of women by the sealers, the shepherds and bushrangers also contributed to the decline. Plomley also blamed 'the general disruption of tribal life'.[29] This latter cause encompassed the whole of *Mairremmener* culture, and the settler occupation of the Aboriginal roads effectively curtailed the cultural practices of thousands of years. It

[28] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, pp. 224, 225.
[29] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, pp. 964-967.

was therefore a major cause – perhaps the major cause – of the rapid decline in population: the loss of the People's will to continue living within a society that had been deprived of the foundations and meaning of its cosmology. By the time Robinson had captured the remnant Peoples near Platform Bluff there was no hope of sustaining or reviving that society. One child was captured, and of the nine women taken, only one was known to be under twenty years of age; most were much older. As noted above, some of the men were very old. The possibility of regeneration, even if the People could be persuaded to try to raise children, was highly improbable. The attitude of the settlers towards this calamity was summarised by the *Hobart Town Courier*, which, while claiming the *Mairremmener* People were 'delighted at the idea of proceeding to the Great Island where they will enjoy peace and plenty uninterrupted', considered:

> Whether the expense of this sable but truly interesting colony will ultimately devolve on the mother country or on us, it behoves the authorities to take special care that the work of education and civilization is duly carried out amongst them. For it is only by means of such efforts that they can be rendered a productive people ... it would be alarming to contemplate the probability of a rapidly increasing colony of savages ignorant and incapable of providing for themselves, and depending solely on us for support.[30]

In the event, there was no need for any such concern, and given that few if any of those settlers who observed the grand parade of the captives into Hobart Town could speak or communicate in any sensible form with the Aborigines, their 'delight' or otherwise at the prospect of exile and forced acculturation was newspaper fiction.

'What he took her country for?' Voices of the dispossessed

On 19 January 1834, during his last conciliatory mission, Robinson camped by the Mersey River east of Mole Creek. He was accompanied by his two sons, seven white servants, and 'fourteen blacks'.[31] At the nearby property owned by Travers Vaughan, 'One of the natives asked Mr Vaughan for a dog. On his refusing she sharply told him, "what he took her country for".'[32] This quote is one of the few Aboriginal voices recorded in settlers' journals which give any indication of the opinion of the dispossessed of their white oppressors. As previously noted, the few settlers who were able to converse with the Aborigines in their own languages

[30] *Hobart Town Courier*, 14 January 1832.
[31] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 825.
[32] P. 836. The name of the woman is unknown.

resulted in almost no written records of Aboriginal voices.[33] In the main, only Robinson's journals, and, to a lesser extent the journals and reports of Jorgen Jorgenson give any indication of the feelings of the *Mairremmener* bands and others, and then rarely in the form of direct quotes.[34] Even in the case of those Aborigines who were bilingual and spoke English, such as Kickerterpoller and Mannalargenner, opinions of the effects of invasion, dispossession, murder and abduction were rarely sought and recorded; probably understandable in the light of the British Government's declared policies relating to the care and preservation of indigenous peoples in the colonies. And while Robinson and Jorgenson did record such observations, their reports are coloured by their personal opinions and beliefs. Allowing for that context, the following comments demonstrate the outrage engendered among the Peoples by the injuries inflicted upon them by the invaders.

An example of Robinson's record of Aboriginal voices can be found in his journal of April 1830, when, at Macquarie Harbour on the first conciliatory mission, he noted that the caution of the *Mimegin* band towards him was that 'doubtless hereforeto [they] had been betrayed by white men ... This was the first time that ever white man had visited their territory for the avowed purpose of doing them good.'[35] Throughout his journals Robinson noted the universal dismay expressed by Kickerterpoller (Black Tom) and Mannalargenner at the effects of the invasion and the actions of the settlers against the Aboriginal bands. During the Big River mission in 1831, Robinson recorded:

> The chiefs [Kickerterpoller and Mannalargenner] assigned as a reason for their outrages upon the white inhabitants that they and their forefathers had been cruelly abused, their country had been taken from them, their wives and daughters had been violated and taken away, and that they had experienced a multitude of wrongs from a variety of sources.[36]

Both "chiefs" had accompanied Robinson on a number of the missions and had gained his trust and respect. He had spent many hours questioning them on their culture and language. His sympathy for their cause can be seen in his journal entry for 15 December 1831, when he noted:

> They do not suppose they can extirpate the white inhabitants. They entertain no such idea. No! they are actuated solely by revenge, revenge to the whites for the dire enormities that have

[33] Plomley noted that 'almost nothing is known of aboriginal opinion'. *Weep in Silence*, p. 214.
[34] For example, in a letter to the Reverend William Bedford, Robinson claimed that 'not one aboriginal native that I have visited but what have dire wrongs to complain of'. *Friendly Mission*, p. 235.
[35] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 156.
[36] P. 571.

> been perpetrated upon their progenitors. They bear a deadly animosity to the white inhabitant on this account, and there is scarcely one among them but what has some monstrous cruelty to relate which had been committed upon some of their kindred or nation or people ...[37]

Robinson also recorded Aboriginal voices explaining important aspects of band culture, especially relating to their cosmology and foundation myths. Woorrady's explanation of Creation has been noted in chapter two, and a similar story was related to Robinson by Mannalargenna. In both cases, Kickerterpoller (Black Tom) demonstrated the effects of acculturation in denying those beliefs, and claiming 'he only believed the white people's story.' His demurrer drew from Truggernanna the angry retort of 'Where did you come from? White woman?'[38] Robinson also recorded a prime reason for the antagonism between Aborigines and their white opponents – the abduction of children. He noted the grief expressed by Towterer of the *Lowreene* band at Point Hibbs on the west coast in June 1833, at the removal of his child by Robinson during the first mission in 1830. The man had 'since made every endeavour by smokes and other indications to induce [Robinson's] return', and Robinson declared:

> It is therefore of vital consequence to the welfare of the aboriginal colony that no forced separation be allowed between parents and their children, and although it may appear (to those unacquainted with the aboriginal character) that on some occasions they seem to acquiesce in the separation of their children, yet this is not the case. This acquiescence is the effect of fear, and they afterwards pine away and die.[39]

Robinson also recorded Woorrady's recollections of the first reactions to the visits of the French expeditions, and to the first arrivals in the Derwent Estuary. Woorrady noted the fear engendered by the sighting of the ships, and that 'by and by more ships came, then at last plenty of ships; [then] the natives went to the mountains, went and looked at what the white people did, went and told other natives and they came and looked also.'[40]

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[37] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 553. Also p. 471, particularly concerning the treatment meted out to the Aboriginal women by the sealers.

[38] Pp. 379, 399. Woorrady was Robinson's 'old and faithful companion' (p. 400) from the early days on Bruny Island. Kickerterpoller was raised in a white household, and was obviously thoroughly inculcated with Christian beliefs. Replying to Mannalargenna, he proclaimed that 'if they believe not [in the Bible] ... they will go to the devil.' p. 399. It is of note that Woorrady and Mannalargenna were from distinctly different socio-linguist groups, yet the creation myth was almost identical.

[39] Pp. 740, 741. Prophetic words, given the later events of the "Stolen Generation". Also pp. 910, 913, relating to the grief of the parents of the Aboriginal boys taken by John Batman.

[40] Pp. 375, 376. The last comment is relevant to the Risdon Cove affray – the agglomeration of many bands "coming to look" at what the white men were doing.

Jorgenson also made some effort to gather information on Aboriginal culture and the opinions of Aborigines on the effects of the invasion and settlement. Jorgenson's guide on many of his expeditions with his roving party was an Aboriginal boy 'about sixteen years of age, and of a kind disposition.' He had been given the name 'Mungo ... by the whites.' When at Lake Echo with Jorgenson's roving party in 1829, Mungo led Jorgenson to a grave of 'a great warrior', where he described the circumstances and manner of the burial.[41] Mungo once deserted from Jorgenson's roving party in February 1831, and probably had advised Jorgenson when the latter reported:

> It might very well happen that some of the Aboriginal Tribes might be pacifically disposed, and others not, and it is scarcely possible to conceive but what Mungo and other Blacks deserted from us, must have informed their countrymen that there is no intention to oppress them, and as we have carried Mungo down the whole line of demarcation [of the settled districts], and most clearly explained to him that beyond such places we dared not capture or kill the Blacks, he may have explained the same to the Aborigines, and thus their line of fires denote that they comprehend us, and have entered into our views. Or, experience may have taught them that within a certain distance from the settlement they are always safe.[42]

Mungo spoke English, and Jorgenson had a reasonable command of some Aboriginal languages, thus allowing a high degree of comprehension between the two.

Jorgenson also drew attention to the deceptions perpetrated by Robinson on his missions, where in more than one instance he conveyed the impression that exile of the Aborigines from Van Diemen's Land would, at worst, be temporary, or would not even have been in contemplation. For example, while on the north-east mission in August 1831, Robinson advised Mannalargenna and Kickerterpoller that he was

> commissioned by the Governor to inform them that, if the natives would desist from their wonted outrages upon the whites, they would remain in their respective districts and would have flour, tea and sugar, clothes &c given them; that a good white man would dwell with them who would take care of them and would not allow any bad white man to shoot them, and

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[41] Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines*, pp. 68, 83. Jorgenson claims that 'Mungo' was taken to the Flinders Island settlement, where he died. There is no record of a 'Mungo' in *Weep in Silence*; however, from Jorgenson's description of Mungo it is likely he was a member of a *Mairremmener* band from the Midlands. Confirmation of this assumption appeared in John Batman's journals, where Mungo is listed as a guide to John Danvers' roving party in April 1830. Campbell, *John Batman and the Aborigines*, p. 39. He may have been Ningernooputener of the *Tyerrernotepanner* band of the Campbell Town district, whom Joseph Milligan called 'Munghepuganna' when on Flinders Island – *Weep in Silence*, pp. 812, 813, 895. Jorgenson reported other instances of English-speaking Aborigines. In an attack on Robert Jones' farm in 1825, Jones' wife claimed the 'chief' threatened her in English, telling her '"as for you ma-am, I'll put you into the river – I'll burn your hut ma-am".' The formality of the language recorded by Jorgenson would raise a question as to embellishment. *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines*, p. 88.

[42] Jorgenson to Anstey, AOT CSO1/1/320, pp. 305, 306.

> he would go with them about the bush like myself and they could then hunt. He [Mannalargenna] was much delighted.[43]

Jorgenson noted that 'Mr Robinson ... invariably told [the Aborigines] they would be placed on some spacious hunting ground, and that they would remain within their own boundaries unmolested. Had [he] even hinted at any intention of sending them to some other island his mission would have totally failed.' Jorgenson expressed his regret at the results of the deceptions and the exile, when he noted that 'Whatever the advantages which are derived to the Colonists from the surrender of the Aboriginal tribes, it is impossible to look at the other side of the picture without feeling the most sensible grief.'[44]

Another settler who purported to record the voices of Aborigines was John Batman, when, in 1830 as leader of a roving party, he employed two Aboriginal women in an attempt to capture the Ben Lomond People. The women had sought refuge at Batman's farm during the Line Campaign. One of the women was Luggenemenener of the *Plangermairreenner* – the Ben Lomond People. Batman, encouraging the women to persuade their band to surrender, 'shook hands and the women wept; "they promised faithfully to return with all of their tribe"'. To Batman's chagrin, the women never returned, but rejoined their band and were taken by Robinson to Swan Island in November 1830.[45] It appeared that Batman was able to converse with the women, probably in English, as Luggennemenener conversed with Robinson in English at the Musselroe River in November 1830.[46] Other settlers who were able and prepared to converse with Aborigines included the settler and roving party leader Gilbert Robertson, whose spirited defence of the murderer Eumarrah was noted above. Robertson captured at least six Aborigines in 1829.[47] One of the captives, Cowerterminna (Cowertenninner, Jack) of the *Karninghe* band of Little Swanport, was living at Robertson's farm at the Coal River in February 1831, and

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[43] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 394.
[44] Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines*, pp. 77, 116.
[45] Campbell, *John Batman and the Aborigines*, pp. 38, 39; Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, pp. 276, 277.
[46] *Friendly Mission*, pp. 276, 1000. Luggenemener was also known as 'Big Tuery' and 'Queen Charlotte'. Taken to the Wybalenna settlement, she died of an unrecorded illness on 22 March 1837. *Weep in Silence*, p. 941. Batman's activities, as reported by West, included a large number of killings. West noted that 'Looked at alone [Batman's] measures are revolting, but to Mr Batman belongs the praise of mingling humanity with severity: of perceiving human affections in the creatures he was commissioned to resist'; an observation hardly shared by Batman's victims and their relatives. West, *The History of Tasmania*, p. 281.
[47] Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines*, p. 110.

apparently had been since his capture in 1829. It is highly probably that he had obtained some English during this time. There is no indication that Robertson was bilingual.[48]

The measure of concern of the *Mairremmener* at their exile from their country can be found in the record of the voice of Walter George Arthur, born about 1820, captured in infancy, and raised in the Hobart Town Orphan School. Walter had no recollection of his real name. His father was Druleerpar (Rolepa, King George) of the *Plangermairreenner*. As Plomley has pointed out, Walter 'was well educated even by the European standard of the time, for he could read and write, and his letters show that he had a ready flow of language.' By 1842, he had become the principal leader of the remnant People on Flinders Island.[49] On 30 December 1845, Walter wrote to George Washington Walker, the noted Quaker and friend and supporter of the exiles, in Hobart Town. His letter followed the recall of the superintendent of the Wybalenna settlement, Dr Joseph Milligan. The letter detailed the successes of the Aborigines in supporting themselves and in adopting Christian teachings, and lauded the efforts of the catechist Robert Clark and his wife. As Plomley also pointed out, Walter's correspondence was obviously influenced to a large degree by Clark, evident in the phrasing of this letter in particular. However, the relevant note appeared in the final paragraph, where Arthur thanked Walker 'for your kindness to us poor Black people of Van Diemen's Land'; a poignant reminder that the Aborigines still clung dearly to their country.[50] Arthur was also a signatory to the 1846 petition to Queen Victoria praying that the former superintendent, Dr Henry Jeanneret, not be reinstated. The petition, drawn up with the assistance of Clark, began with a preamble noting that 'we are your free children that we were not taken prisoners but freely gave up our country to Colonel Arthur after defending ourselves [and] that Mr Robinson made for us and with Colonel Arthur an agreement which we have not lost from our minds since and we have made our part of it good.'[51] As demonstrated by Henry Reynolds, the words indicated that the original belief of the exiles was that there was an agreement 'for a

[48] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, pp. 107, 351, 461 n.171; *Weep in Silence*, pp. 53, 797. Cowertenninner died from the effects of dysentery on Gun Carriage (Vansittart) Island on 12 May 1831.
[49] *Friendly Mission*, p. 993; *Weep in Silence*, pp. 188, 211, 851.
[50] Papers of James Erskine Calder, Mitchell Library, Sydney, MS A612, pp. 222-224.
[51] *Weep in Silence*, pp. 148, 149.

temporary sojourn on Flinders Island followed by a return to mainland Tasmania', at the very least on a regular basis.[52]

The voices of the dispossessed, while few on record, demonstrated that, while they apparently acquiesced to the surrender of the sovereignty of their country, they did not suppose they had been permanently exiled, never to return. The melancholy that would have been experienced by the soon-to-be exiles as the brig *Tamar* sailed out of the Derwent Estuary in 1831 is elegantly expressed in their own language – *relany-quonga* – the sad gaze.[53]

[52] Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People*, pp. 7-14. Windschuttle dismissed Reynolds' interpretation on the grounds that the words in the petition fail to 'specify what the agreement actually said', and that Walter George Arthur, having been raised in the Orphan School, could 'not have had any direct knowledge of ... any [such] agreement'. Windschuttle, *Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, p. 233. However, Windschuttle neglected two facts. First, the evidence in Robinson's journals of his deceptions used in persuading the Aborigines to surrender, as noted above; and secondly, that Walter George Arthur spent a number of years with his father, Druleerpar, at the Wybalenna settlement, until his father's death in June 1838. In addition, Walter was in continual contact with the older People who were well acquainted with the promises made by Robinson during the missions.

[53] Milligan, *Vocabulary*, p. 41. Language of the 'Tribes from Oyster Bay to Pittwater'.

Conclusion

A trip to Oyster Cove

This sorrowful picture of the past ... and those who tremble at the remembrance of a murdered native may shudder when they see what the white man has done in this paradise of ours in this day of Christianity and civilization.

"A correspondent", *The Mercury*, 24 April 1872[1]

One last time: on the road to Port Davey

On 6 August 1860, John Strange Dandridge, the superintendent of the Aboriginal establishment at Oyster Cove, reported to the Colonial Secretary that six of the Aborigines at the establishment had been out on a hunting excursion for over seven weeks, a longer period than usual, and he was concerned for their safety. He understood that they were headed in the direction of Port Davey, a journey they had never before undertaken, and he intended to request police magistrate Edward Walpole to direct the police to make enquiries. Two days later, however, he was able to report that 'the natives, about whose absence I was becoming anxious, arrived home this afternoon ... They are in excellent health, and have not had the slightest sickness during their excursion.'[2] The 'natives' were Plownneme of the *Plangermairreenner* (Ben Lomond) People; Cueenner of the west coast, band unknown; Drayduric of the *Needwonee* (Port Davey) People; Purlurrepennenner of the east coast, band unknown; Theomanope of the *Lowreenne* (Rocky Point) People; and Calamarowenye of the *Poredareme* People of Oyster Bay. Respectively, they were known by the English names of 'Flora', 'Patty', 'Sophia', 'Emma', 'Augustus', and 'Tippoo'. Within a week, Augustus and Tippoo were dead. Dandridge reported that Augustus died 'in a most resigned state, without suffering'. Tippoo was also 'quite resigned'. Within the year, Sophia was also dead. Dandridge reported her age 'not less than seventy-five'. She was in fact about sixty years, and had accompanied George Augustus Robinson on his first conciliatory mission to the Aborigines of the west coast.[3] It is significant that both Augustus and Sophia were west coast people, and it is highly likely that the journey to the west coast in 1860 was a last nomadic

[1] "A correspondent", *The Mercury*, Hobart, 24 April 1872. The correspondent was James Erskine Calder.
[2] J. S. Dandridge to Colonial Secretary, 8 August 1860, CSD1/121/4338, AOT, Hobart.
[3] Dandridge, 4 September 1860 & 31 August 1861; Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, pp. 113-241.

trip along the familiar Aboriginal *Markenner* that traversed the southern coast of Van Diemen's Land, a road used by Robinson on the 1830 mission. The party comprised six elderly men and women, all ill from neglect and the effects of alcohol, yet they undertook this arduous journey that tested many fitter explorers of later times. While sad and tragic at first glance, it was perhaps a spiritual journey, a return to country for Augustus and Sophia, supported by their four companions.

At the beginning of 1861, ten Aborigines were living at the Oyster Cove Aboriginal establishment: by 1869, it had been closed and the two surviving Aborigines – Trugernanna (Lalla Rookh) and Mary Ann – were cared for by Dandridge, who remained at the closed establishment until 1873, when he moved to Hobart Town taking Trugernanna with him (Mary Ann had died in 1871). Trugernanna died in Hobart on 8 May 1876.[4] Fifty-one *Mairremmener* People had been exiled on Flinders Island from 1831; ten survivors were repatriated to Oyster Cove in 1847. The last *Mairremmener*-speaker – Wobbelty (Wapperty) – died on 12 August 1867.

Our country, your land: the process of colonialism

The history of the *Mairremmener* People is an analogue for the narrative of many nomadic hunting and gathering societies. Successful and happy within their ecological environment, their world was conclusively and fatally changed by the invasion of the British imperialists, whose insatiable thirst was for new lands. The conceit of the superiority – indeed, the belief in the inevitable victory – of Western civilization was the prime driver of imperial expansion, with its concomitants of mercantilism and the search for dumping grounds for the detritus of British society. In so-called civilized societies money was the only measure of wealth, and money was had by the exploitation of land and human capital in conquered, ceded or occupied foreign lands, using slaves and other forms of cheap labour, including exiled convicts and poor emigrants. In Van Diemen's Land in particular, land, freely distributed, was 'the main article of colonial wealth'.[5] The Aboriginal inhabitants of the island became invisible savages, considered incapable of owning the lands they occupied; a fact established in the minds of their dispossessors by their failure to improve those lands

[4] Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, pp. 189, 190.
[5] Eldershaw in McKay, *Journals of the Land Commissioners*, p. xiv.

through pastoralism or agriculture. The hunting, gatherering and nomadic way of life of the Aboriginal societies of the island was considered to occupy the lowest place in the spectrum of civilization. To the invading colonists, it was inconceivable that these savages could be the owners of the lands over which they ranged. The centrality of land – "country" – in the culture of Aboriginal societies was only brought home to the colonists when the savages began to resist dispossession with bloody reprisals. The initial surprise, even shock, at this fierce resistance by Peoples whom the colonists had considered a harmless, gentle race, and who had been for the most part an invisible presence, was soon replaced by open hostility towards them, and ultimately, open warfare.[6]

The *Mairremmener* People in particular were the victims of the colonial process. They were a successful and enduring society, an agglomeration of twenty or more bands, with a common language and culture developed and adapted over millennia. They had observed the visits of European explorers from the seventeenth century onwards, and, by and large, had experienced only friendly contact with these white men. Certainly, the visits of sealing and whaling ships at the end of the eighteenth century had created some friction and conflict, especially where the abduction of women took place, but all these visits were brief and the strangers came and left in relatively short order, their ships becoming part of the cultural landscape of the east coast Peoples. In itself, the acceptance of the visitors, generally without hostility and often with open hospitality, was a measure of the *Mairremmener* ability to adapt and absorb other "beings" into their culture. When the permanent settlement at the Derwent Estuary took place it came as a sudden shock to the People – the strangers now clearly intended to stay. As these new people began to disturb *Mairremmener* culture by removing or destroying parts of the cultural landscape – the slaughter of native animals, the felling of trees, the introduction of exotic animals and the construction of permanent and substantial buildings being examples – the People had the choices of acquiescence, confrontation or retreat. In the initial period of settlement, they chose the latter course, becoming to all intent and purpose

[6] For example, George Evans, in his booster publication for potential emigrants published in 1822, claimed that 'it may confidently be expected that a friendly intercourse, similar to that in New South Wales will be hereafter maintained [with the Tasmanian Aborigines], notwithstanding the outrage [the Risdon Cove affray] committed on these apparently harmless people at the early establishment of the colony.' Evans, *A Geographical, Historical and Topographical Description of Van Diemen's Land*, p. 25.

invisible and harmless: a circumstance which suited the invaders. Unlike the *Nuennone* People of Bruny Island, or the Peoples of the Channel country and the south west below the Derwent Estuary, the *Mairremmener* kept their distance from the settlements. They were able to do so by the remoteness of their country – the east coast littoral north of the Estuary, the open savannah of the Midlands, and the lower parts of the Central Plateau – the most fertile and bountiful parts of the island; a cornucopia providing the spiritual and economic needs of their society. As the result, aside from the murderous affray at Risdon Cove in 1804, the first two decades of British settlement were times of relative peace, the invisible Aborigines allowed to carry on with their lives in their remote parts.[7] The rapid of expansion of settlement into *Mairremmener* country from 1823 onwards, and the resulting dispossession and exclusion of the People from their land – the essence of their culture – lead to the inevitable end of their society.

The conflict which followed, and which by 1828 had developed into open warfare between black and white, was unavoidable for a number of reasons. First and foremost, it was the result of the British settlers' belief in the superiority of their culture over that of the 'savages'. The progress of a society was, to Europeans, dictated by science and technology, religion and education: other societies lacking those attributes were to be raised to a civilized level, or pushed aside. At worst, if proved incorrigible, they were to be extirpated – rooted out and exiled or eliminated. The second reason flowed from the first as a concomitant of the notion of superiority: that is, the failure at the highest levels to observe, study or even consider applying Degerando's dictum: of knowing indigenous peoples by observing their culture, living with them, and particularly, by learning their languages. It was patent that the settlers in Van Diemen's Land considered it unnecessary to communicate with the Aborigines, as the resolution of 23 May 1831 indicated, much less to investigate the culture of the People.[8] The feelings were not mutual. Many Aborigines, including

[7] At the public meeting held in Hobart Town on 23 May 1831, a motion was passed which in part declared that 'upon the accession of the present Colonial administration to the Government of this colony in 1824, the feeling of the native and white populations towards each other was free from excitement and intercourse indulged in between them with as much contentment, generally speaking, as was natural to their relative situations and circumstances, few instances having occurred of hostile collision, terminating either in loss of life or property to the colonists'. *Hobart Town Courier*, 28 May 1831. The resolution made clear where concern lay: the 'natives' received no consideration.

[8] 'J.E.' [James Erskine Calder] noted in his letter to the *Launceston Advertiser* in August 1831, 'The savages are ignorant of our laws; they have never lived under the protection of them; it is questionable

members of *Mairremmener* bands, became reasonably proficient in English, a skill which, for a time, stood them in good stead. It was only as a last resort that Lieutenant-Governor Arthur turned to an individual who had made the effort to understand and communicate: that is, to George Augustus Robinson, the 'great conciliator'.

The third reason, again briefly noted above, also flowed from the first: the belief that the country of the *Mairremmener* was unoccupied waste land, open for the taking. It was an entrenched belief, a central concept in the discourse of Empire. If the indigenes occupying potential colonies were uncivilized in the European sense, they could be dispossessed at will, with no regard to their rights other than they gained the unasked for and generally unwanted privilege of becoming British subjects. It was the vast gulf between the settlers' concept of "land" and the Aborigines' concept of "country" which, in the event, was to be the prime cause of conflict. British law, upholding as it did the rights of the individual to private property, including the unalienable right to the ownership of land, was totally at odds with the Aboriginal beliefs in country, which included principles of communality and reciprocity. "Country" was the glue tying together all the beings that formed part of the Aboriginal cultural landscape: the flora and fauna that resided upon it; the rocks and mountains, the rivers and lakes; the adjacent seas and the marine environment; the sky and its firmament. Along with the Aborigines themselves, country and its beings formed the spiritual base of their culture; a cosmology explicated a number of times to George Augustus Robinson during his conversations with his Aboriginal companions while on his conciliatory missions. Robinson (and a few others, such as James Calder and Jorgen Jorgenson) understood, but again influenced by the notion of superiority and the guidance of their religion, dismissed those beliefs as contemptible myths and merely 'indulged' those expounding them.[9] The two ideologies could never be reconciled. Gaining the 'main article of colonial wealth' was the objective of the settlers at any cost, an objective conclusively achieved in Van Diemen's Land in the short space of four decades.

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if they know what laws are, according to our acceptation of the term.' *Launceston Advertiser*, 22 August 1831. Calder may well have been wrong, and, in a sense, demonstrated the attitude of British superiority. English-speaking *Mairremmener*, such as Kickerterpoller, far from being ignorant, well understood the 'laws' and had lived under them, and (very) occasionally used them to advantage, such as in the case of the Flinders Island petition to Queen Victoria, discussed above.

[9] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 493.

Finally, the tactics adopted by *Mairremmener* bands in pursuing their warfare against the settlers were in opposition to the received European notion of the rules of war. Sometimes described as 'guerrilla' tactics (in reference to the then proximate Peninsula Campaign in Spain), the killing of women and children, the driving and slaughtering of stock and the plundering and burning of houses, huts and haystacks was, to the settlers, an unacceptable and 'cruel warfare of the worst kind'.[10] The *Mairremmener* had little choice but to adopt hit-and-run tactics: their numbers, contrary to the exaggerated claims of some settlers, were very small and rapidly dwindling, and they were opposed by vastly superior numbers and weaponry. The tactics they used aroused the hatred of the settlers and reinforced the determination to drive the Aborigines out of the settled districts;. and, among a not-unsubstantial majority, formed a wish to destroy them. Melville, for example, freely discussed the indiscriminate murders of Aboriginal men, women and children by settlers.[11] Given the retaliatory and punitive measures taken against them, it was no wonder that the Aborigines responded in kind. The enmity generated between the adversaries fed on itself, and rapidly escalated into open warfare without quarter being given.

In sum, the experiences visited upon the *Mairremmener* People of Van Diemen's Land by the invading settlers mirrored those of the indigenes of many other British colonies. In the Cape Colony for example, the *Hobart Town Courier* noted that 'Pato and Kama are sons of the late Congo [chief of the Caffer] who was killed near Sunday's river some years ago, when his people were driven from the Zuurvedlt'. The newspaper went on to observe that the two sons were to be given 'an English education', as 'the advantage of a friendly intercourse would be very great both to the colonists and the Caffers [sic]'.[12] In all the Anglophone colonies of the late eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries, the pattern was repeated – land, in the meaning constructed by British law, was acquired by cession through generally unequal treaties; by conquest and extirpation of the indigenes; or simply by seizure

[10] Dr Turnbull, addressing the public meeting in Hobart Town on 23 September 1830. *Hobart Town Courier*, 25 September 1830.
[11] Melville, *The History of the Island of Van Diemen's Land*, p. 75. Melville however acknowledged that the retaliation by the Aborigines in the murders of women and children was understandable when 'the white population made no difference with them', p. 26.
[12] *Hobart Town Courier*, 25 September 1830. The implications were clear: first that the existing 'intercourse' was less than friendly; and second, that it was preferable that the 'Caffers' learn English than the colonists learn 'Caffer'.

from invisible savages who, in imperial ideology, had no claim to private property.[13] Beginning in the very early colonies in North America, then in Canada, South Africa, New Holland and New Zealand, the indigenous peoples were thrust aside in the scramble for land. Treaties, where they existed, were ignored or abused. Conquered populations were sometimes enslaved, often exiled and frequently murdered, as were the "invisible" dispossessed in the seized lands, in defiance of their status as British subjects. The era of humanitarianism that flowed from the Evangelical Revival provided only passing relief to the victims. In the patent tension between apparently antithetical objectives – that is, the need to dispossess and the desire to redeem and civilize those whose country had been taken and occupied – the need was to always overcome the desire. Mercantilism prevailed over humanitarianism, greed over empathy and kindness. Aside from imperial objectives, the role of individuals in the discourse of Empire was summed by Cole Harris, when he pointed out that;

> For the most part, colonial administrators, politicians, and settlers were ordinary people with both their own interests and some sense of right conduct in mind. A few of them were intensely interested in the predicament of the Native people in an emerging settler society, and strove to find some humane solution to it.[14]

Sadly, in the British colonies, it was too few who did too little striving, and then in a misguided way, weighed as they were by the conceit of the superiority of their own culture.

Altruism or self-interest? A political choice

So it was in Van Diemen's Land, and in particular, in the case of the *Mairremmener* People and their bountiful country during the administration of Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur between 1824 and 1832. The viceroy was undoubtedly a well-intentioned humanitarian, not only towards the Aborigines, but also toward his wretched transported convicts, whose welfare was a major issue for him.[15] The dictates of the Colonial Office requiring Arthur to act humanely towards

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[13] Throughout this thesis, and as noted in the Introduction, the expression '*terra nullius*' – unoccupied lands or lands without owners – is not used, as it is a doctrinal term postdating the period under review.
[14] Harris, *Making Native Space*, p. xxiii.
[15] Arthur's attitude towards the convicts has often been painted as cruel and callous. His most vituperative critics included Alexander Maconochie, who claimed that '[Arthur's] system of convict discipline [was] essentially vicious ... rooted in a false and degrading estimate of human nature – deteriorating, consequently, everything within its influence – a disgrace to England, to science, to humanity.' Maconochie, *On Colonel Arthur's General Character and Government*, p. 21. Similar criticisms were made by Henry Melville and others. A balanced view of Arthur – the measure of his humanity towards the convicts as opposed to his concern over discipline, reformation and morality – can be found in West, *The History of Tasmania*, 'Transportation', Section XV, pp. 435- 463.

the Aborigines as much as possible was generally scrupulously observed, not only because it was an administrative duty to be reported to his masters on a regular basis, but also because that was his own inclination. On the other hand, he was faced with the immediate demands of his settler-subjects who were the victims of Aboriginal reprisals; subjects who, in many cases, had the ear of the British government and were quick to voice their concerns to Westminster. In addition, Arthur faced the constant carping criticism of the majority of the colony's newspapers, especially by proprietors such as Henry Melville and Gilbert Robertson, who were avowed enemies of the Lieutenant-Governor. For an ambitious man who had shown a determination to succeed in the colonial service, a Solomon-like resolution of the tension between humanitarianism and political pressure was beyond Arthur's wit and ability. Arthur conceded as much in a despatch of 15 April 1830, to Sir George Murray, the Secretary of State for the Colonies, declaring that 'His Majesty's subjects must be protected, and the outrages of the black Natives must be repressed, and yet if it can be avoided these wretched people must not be destroyed.'[16]

Rational choice determines behaviour, and choices rest along a spectrum of altruism to self-interest. In the event, Arthur's choice was that of the quintessential politician; he bowed to the will of the majority, including the most influential of his subjects, and, without stepping outside the bounds of his vice-regal remit, persecuted the least-influential – the Aborigines. He used a carefully crafted plan which ensured that the *Mairremmener* became rebels against the Crown, and outlaws. The subsequent Line Campaign, while not achieving its prime objective of the capture of the outlawed bands, succeeded in the main in driving them out of the settled districts. Arthur's keen support of Robinson's purported conciliatory missions – in effect, another scheme for the capture of the People – resulted in achieving the failed objective of the Line Campaign. As the result, he gained the approbation of his colonial masters and the success he sought in the colonial service. Shaw noted that Arthur's attributes included

> an almost incredible industry, strong imperial sentiments, a passion for 'approbation' of his work from his superiors, a desire for financial rewards ...for the sake of his family, a strong dislike of opposition ... and an undoubted humanitarianism based on a deeply felt devotion to his Calvinistic brand of Christianity [and] the belief that his first duty was to obey, not to evade [the policies of the Colonial Office].[17]

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[16] *Copies of all correspondence*, p. 16.
[17] Shaw, *Sir George Arthur, Bart.*, p. 60.

Among the qualities Arthur lacked was a desire to learn and understand the culture of the Tasmanians, who, until they were outlawed, were subjects of the Crown. As such, it was Arthur's duty to ensure their well-being; a state only achievable by gaining an understanding of their society. In the end, his overweening ambition overcame his humanitarian instincts and he placed his career before his humanitarianism. His regret over that choice is reflected in a letter to Lord Glenelg, Secretary of State for the Colonies, in 1837, following his return to England. Arthur claimed that:

> On the first occupation of Van Diemen's Land a very injudicious course of proceedings were followed towards the Natives, and I deeply lament to acknowledge that, being incapable of forming an opinion of my own, based *upon experience*, and being perplexed by the adverse opinion of others, I fell into some very wrong notions in the early part of my Government, from whence very injurious consequences resulted.[18]

While clearly a form of exculpation, made at a time when Arthur was seeking another colonial posting, the remorse expressed is profound. Arthur was not the despot villianized by a few later historians; he was a clever political actor and a very competent public servant who made a rational choice, albeit one which ended catastrophically for the Tasmanians.

The acumen of the elders: the skilled leaders of the Mairremmener

In the narratives of the dispossession of the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land, the Peoples were often painted as a once-harmless society transformed into vicious killers by a combination of a thirst for revenge and the desire for European goods such as tea, sugar and blankets. Attacks on settlers' houses and huts were undertaken supposedly with the encouragement of and skills learned from outsiders such as Musquito (Yerrangoulaga), the New South Wales Aborigine.[19] A myth of white men, perhaps escaped convicts, leading or participating in Aboriginal attacks also gained currency, the assumptions being that the bands were incapable of uniting in a common cause and having the skills and courage to pit themselves against the settlers and the military.[20] The narratives neglected to consider the abilities and

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[18] Arthur , quoted in Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People*, pp. 121, 122.

[19] Melville, *The History of the Island of Van Diemen's Land*, pp. 25, 26; *Hobart Town Gazette*, 10 July 1824, 'The only tribe who have done any mischief, were corrupted by Musquito, a Sydney black; who, with much and perverted cunning, taught them a portion of his own villainy, and incited them time after time to join in his delinquencies.'; also, Calder, *An Account of the Wars, Habits, Extirpation, &c*, p. 47.

[20] See, for example, the report of a white man 'one 'Green', accompanying the band that wounded Mrs Langford and her daughter and killed her son at Green Ponds in October 1828. *Hobart Town Gazette*, 1 November 1828; also Calder, pp. 75-77.

leadership of such men as Tongelongter and Kickerterpoller, both of whom led bands in attacks long after Musquito had been executed. Many of these attacks demonstrated careful planning and clever tactics, and both of these leaders went on to assist Robinson in the conciliatory missions. Indeed, without the multilingual skills and bushmanship of Kickerterpoller, it is unlikely that Robinson would have succeeded.[21] As James Calder noted .

> [the Aborigines] were naturally an intellectual race, with faculties susceptible of very easy culture, as they showed when in their wild state, by the clever manner in which (after a brief association firstly with the half civilised Musquito, and secondly, with some other domesticated blacks, such as Tegg for example, and many others), they planned all their operations against the Settlers, in which they seldom failed of success ...[22]

When the last small remnant of the *Mairremmener* bands was marched into Hobart Town in January 1832, they were led by Montpeliatter and Tongelongter, the two celebrated elders whose skills had enabled the bands to evade capture during the Line Campaign and for the months following. The remnant included other elders with bilingual skills such as Kallerromter (Tippoo) and Parwaretar (Lawyer), both of whom had accompanied Robinson on some of his missions, and had engaged with settlers at times in a peaceful manner.[23] Their agreement to go with Robinson to meet the Lieutenant-Governor was gained by subterfuge, as was their agreement to what they believed was to be a temporary removal to Flinders Island. They did not surrender, nor were they captured as claimed by the settlers: they understood and believed Robinson's promises and inducements, and voluntarily went with him in order to negotiate their continued existence as an independent People in their own country. They were deceived, and a measure of the deception was found in the Lieutenant-Governor's despatch to Sir George Murray in April 1831, when he claimed:

> with reference to the experience we have already had of the instability of these savages, and attaching much importance to Mr Robinson's opinion, that the chiefs have but little influence over their tribes, and that he does not think they could deter them from the commission of fresh atrocities, or that any dependence could be placed in the observance of a treaty, even if

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[21] An interesting aside is the evidence that Musquito may have used boomerangs while with the *Mairremmener* bands, at times to good effect – see West, *The History of Tasmania*, p. 26, '[Musquito] was seen to cut off the head of a pigeon with a stick, while flying.', p. 267. The boomerang was a weapon unknown to the Tasmanians – if it was so effective in Musquito's hands, it is surprising that, as a dominant leader, he was unable to convince the band he was supposed to have led to adopt the weapon.

[22] Calder, *Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits, &c*, p. 57. Calder was, of course, a man of his time. The superiority of Western culture was simply assumed.

[23] Kallerromter died in 1860, at the Oyster Cove Aboriginal station, as noted above. Parewaretar accompanied Robinson on his first mission to the west coast, but deserted the party on 12 May 1830, in company with Eumarrah and Trepanner. Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, pp. 160, 230 n. 82.

> they could be induced to enter into it ... that they should be drawn by every mild excitement to resort to the Aboriginal Establishment at Gun-Carriage [Vansittart] Island; for even if they should pine away in the manner the Chief Justice apprehends, it is better that they should meet their death in that way, whilst every act of kindness is manifested towards them, than that they should fall a sacrifice to the inevitable consequences of their continued acts of outrage upon the white inhabitants.[24]

The inferences in this comment are very plain. There was never any intention to meet the expectations of the *Mairremmener* by means of a treaty. Arthur was again demonstrating his own failures in his inability to communicate with the People and his total lack of understanding of their culture. Robinson at least should have known better; he had the advantage of their language, knowledge of their culture, and at times, their company over extended periods. The ability of the elders to lead and influence the band members was patent, as Robinson had experienced over the years; a fact he was to employ to his advantage on future missions. The latter part of Arthur's despatch, acknowledging that the proposed exile may have a tragic end, was the clear indication of the real purpose of the mission – to permanently remove the Aborigines from Van Diemen's Land, whatever the ultimate cost. James Calder's statement in the epigraph at the head of this chapter eloquently described the tragic consequences.

'We don't want to live here': the People at Flinders Island[25]

Together with a small number already exiled, some forty *Mairremmener* People from several bands were sent to the new Aboriginal settlement on Flinders Island (to where it was removed from Gun-Carriage Island in November 1831). Their names appear in Appendix 3. Eighteen of the People appeared in the burial records as having died at Wybalenna Settlement (as the Aboriginal station was now called). They included Montpeliatter, the leader at Platform Bluff in 1831, and his wife, Drierlergenerminer (Queen Elizabeth); Tongelongter (Governor), the one-armed man who was also a leader at Platform Bluff, and had led many attacks against the settlers; and Tanleboneyer (Sal), a *Loontemairenner* woman who had been with Robinson on the missions in 1830 and 1833. Other well-known People buried at the settlement included Memerlannelargenna, the brother of Parwaretar (Lawyer), an elder and warrior who had fought the settlers and the military during the Black War; and

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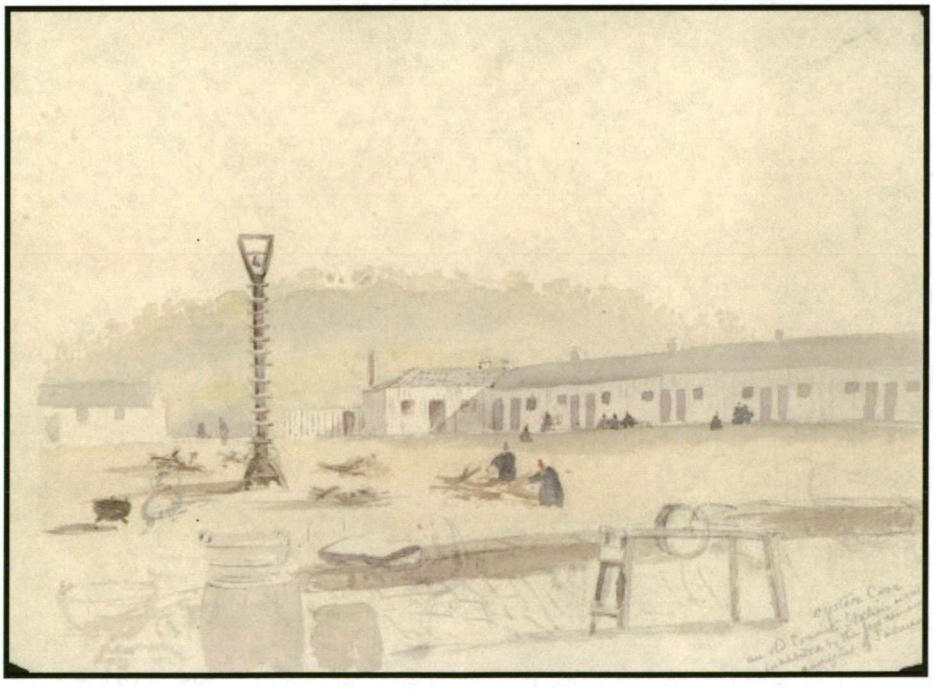
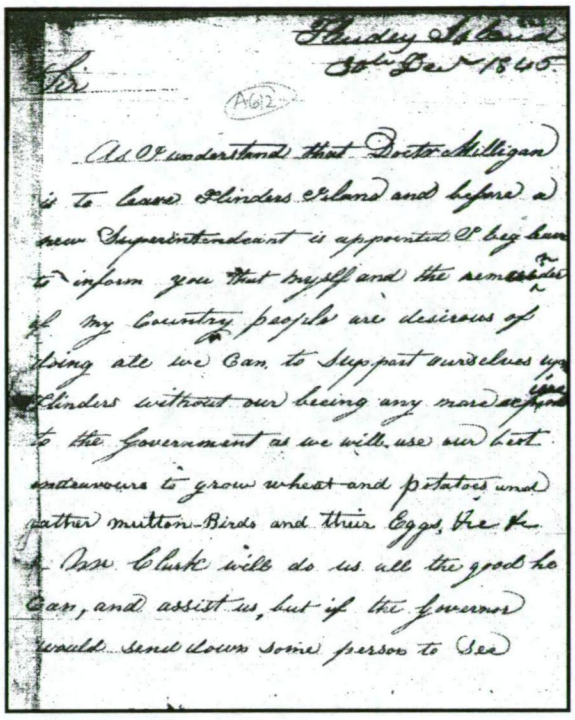
[24] *Copies of all correspondence*, p. 79. The opinion of Chief Justice Pedder as to the likely result of exiling the Aborigines proved to be completely accurate.
[25] Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, p. 326.

'Residence of the Aborigines, Flinders Island'
John Skinner Prout, 1846
National Library of Australia



'Oyster Cove, an old convict station, now inhabited by the few remaining Aborigines of Tasmania'
Charles Edward Stanley, ca. 1849
National Library of Australia



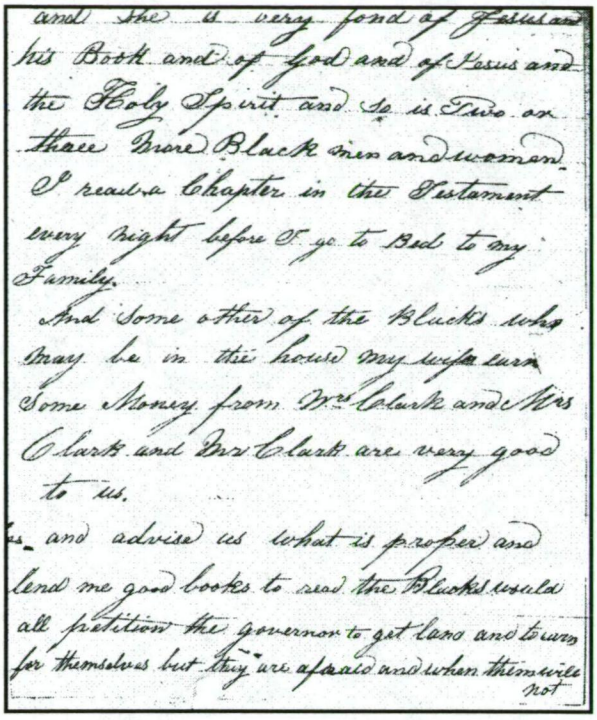
Flinders Island
30th Dec 1845

Sir

(A612)

As I understand that Doctor Milligan is to leave Flinders Island and before a new Superintendent is appointed I beg leave to inform you that myself and the remainder of my Country people are desirous of doing all we can to support ourselves upon Flinders without our being any more expense to the government as we will use our best endeavours to grow wheat and potatoes and gather mutton-Birds and their Eggs &c &c

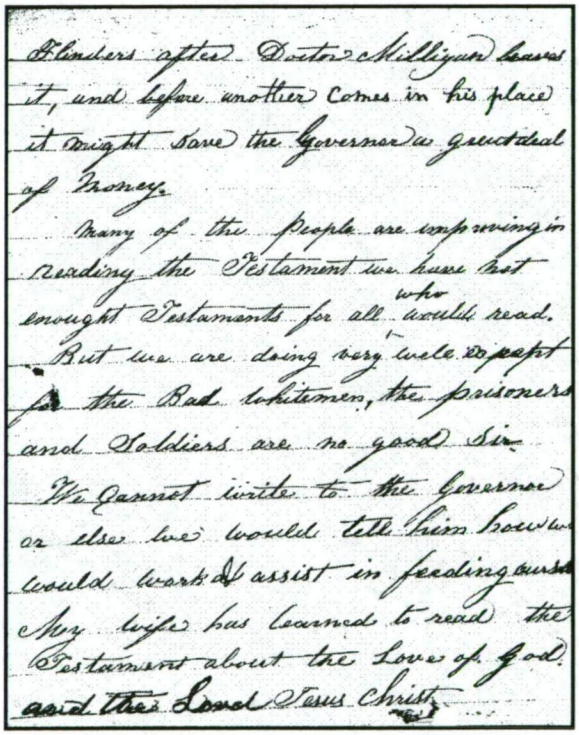
Rev Clark will do us all the good he can, and assist us, but if the Governor would send down some person to see



and she is very fond of Jesus and his Book and of God and of Jesus and the Holy Spirit and so is Two or three more Black men and women. I read a Chapter in the Testament every night before I go to Bed to my Family.

And some other of the Blacks who may be in this house may wish earn Some Money from Mrs Clark and Mrs Clark and Rev Clark are very good to us.

and advise us what is proper and lend me good books to read the Blacks would all petition the governor to get Lands and to earn for themselves but they are afraid and when they will not

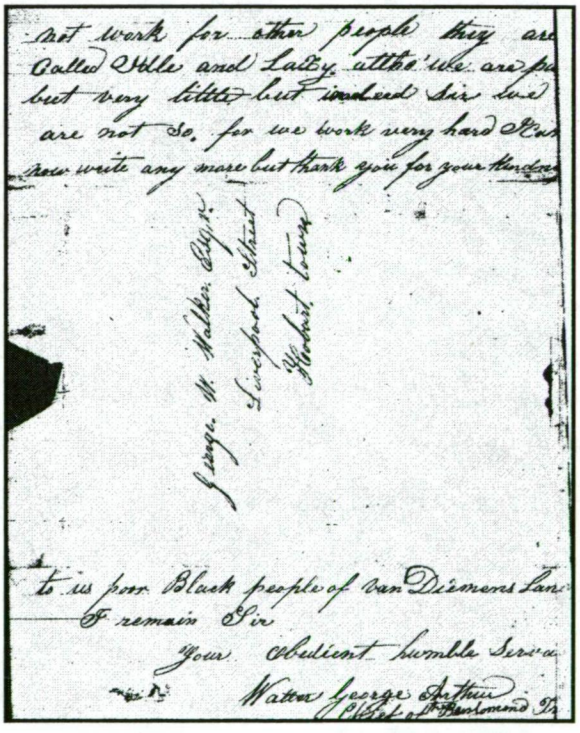


Flinders after Doctor Milligan leaves it, and before another Comes in his place it might save the Governor a great deal of Money.

Many of the people are improving in reading the Testament we have not enough Testaments for all who would read.

But we are doing very well except the Bad whitemen, the prisoners and Soldiers are no good Sir.

We cannot write to the Governor or else we would tell him how we would work & assist in feeding ourselves My wife has learned to read the Testament about the Love of God and the Lord Jesus Christ



not work for other people they are called Idle and Lazy, altho' we are paid but very little but indeed Sir we are not so. for we work very hard Now I now write any more but thank you for your kindness

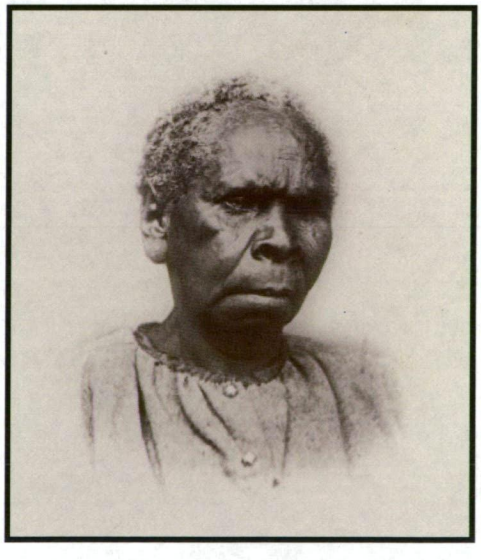
George W. Walker Esq.
Liverpool Street
Hobart Town

to us poor Black people of Van Diemens Land

I remain Sir
Your Obedient humble Servant
Walter George Arthur
Native of Bruny Island

Letter to G.W.Walker from Walter George Arthur, 1845
Calder Papers, Mitchell Library, Sydney, MS A612

'Natives at Oyster Cove, Nov. 1847'
Charles Edward Stanley, 1847
National Library of Australia
The 'natives' were (from the left facing): Maccamee[Washington]; [Little George]; [Mary Anne]; Thoonock [Edmund]; Tingarnoke [possiblyTingernoop]; [Billy]; Mathabelianna [Matilda].
Names in brackets are given English names. The Aboriginal names of the children are unknown.



'Wapperty, 70 years old'
J. W. Beattie, ca. 1880s
National Library of Australia
The Library dating is incorrect. Wapperty, the last of the *Mairremmener* People, died at Oyster Cove Settlement on 12 August 1867

Dranetunneminnener (Long'un), Looerryminer (Boatswain), and Mirnermannerme (Maria), all women who had been abducted by sealers, and were well-known in the Straits. Two exiles had died and were buried in other locations. Woollaytoopinneya, the *Lairmairrener* woman who had guided Robinson on his Big River Mission in 1831, died at Emu Bay before the end of March 1832; and the celebrated 'Lawyer', Parwaretar, died at Hobart Town sometime in 1835 or 1836. He had apparently managed to inveigle his way off the settlement, and returned to his homeland – a rare feat, although there are some instances where Robinson (and other superintendents) took Aborigines to Hobart Town for medical treatment, and some children were taken from their parents and sent to the Orphan School in Hobart Town. Several others must have died at Wybalenna, but are not specifically recorded; the burial records often simply noted sex, or used a given English name. Those not recorded would have included Pootappellureyanner, Larkumpinerungerner and Poettigwerlayde, the elderly men captured at Platform Bluff, never to see their country again.[26]

The causes of death are instructive: of ninety-three recorded cases (of all Aborigines at the settlement), forty-four were related to respiratory infections, including pneumonia, influenza and catarrh. A further eleven died from tuberculosis, proving the extreme (and usually fatal) susceptibility of the Aborigines to respiratory infections: an influenza epidemic in 1839 killed many, including a number of children born at the settlement.[27] Only one cause was related to a sexually-transmitted disease –'sequalae of syphilis' – the death of Teddeheburer (Clara) a west coast woman. She was twenty-four years, and had not associated with the sealers. Of the well-known *Mairremmener* exiles, Montpeliatter (now known as 'Waterloo') and his wife Drierlergenerminer (Queen Elizabeth) both died from pneumonia. The dead were not spared indignities, autopsies being routinely carried out. Tongelongter, who died in June 1837, was examined after death, a diagnosis of peritonitis being reported. The

[26] Details of *Mairremmener* People from Plomley, *Friendly Mission & Weep in Silence.* Many burials went unrecorded.

[27] In a report to Robinson (as superintendent of the settlement) in September 1837, the surgeon James Allen ascribed the susceptibility to respiratory infections to the cessation of the Aboriginal practice of 'covering their skin with a mixture of animal fat and carbonate of iron [ochre]' as a protection against the cold, the use of blankets in place not proving adequate. Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, pp. 920-922.

stump of his severed arm was also examined, the convict medical attendant Alexander Austin determining that the arm had been 'violently torn away'.[28]

It was plain enough to the exiles that their continued captivity on Flinders Island was tantamount to a death sentence. That concern was expressed very forcibly by Tongelongter and Druleerpar to Robinson in 1837, as noted in chapter seven. Medical care was very good by the standards of the time; indeed, the presence of a full-time surgeon was a service not provided to many of the settlers.[29] However, the medical science of the day was such that treatment of illnesses was inadequate, and the European foods provided were a problematic change in diet affecting Aboriginal health. The sheer boredom of confinement on a relatively small island where most Aboriginal cultural practices were proscribed almost guaranteed a short life span, even with the best intentions of the superintendents and the government. In particular, the loss of the nomadic culture was destructive to morale, and took away the very reason for existence. Attempts made by successive superintendents to replicate cultural practices on a small island were doomed to fail. For example, the Peoples were separated into their respective bands; however, band numbers were now very small, and the close proximity of the cottages to each other resulted in conflict between them. The *Mairremmener* and Ben Lomond Peoples were traditional enemies, as were other socio-linguistic groups, and west coast bands were not only unfamiliar with the east coast peoples; they did not even speak the same languages.[30]

As the Aborigines refused to be trained as agricultural labourers they had considerable time on their hands, time often spent in extended hunting periods away from the settlement, much to the chagrin of the superintendents who failed to understand that the People were attempting in their own small way to replicate the cultural practices of their country. The teaching of Christianity (at the particular insistence of Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur) was a 'gross stupidity because it destroyed the natural religion rather than attempted to come to terms with it'. As

[28] Details of the *Mairremmener* at Wybalenna from *Weep in Silence*, Appendices IA-IN & II A-II-E, pp. 791-948. Alexander Austin, *per* Ship *Woodford*, August 1828, occupation listed a 'surgeon'. *Weep in Silence*, p. 985.
[29] Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People*, pp. 187, 188. Reynolds pointed out that there were only twelve surgeons in the whole of the colony 'about one for every 200 people'.
[30] However, as Reynolds also pointed out, the survivors quickly developed a creole which provided a universal language, as well as learning English; p. 168.

Plomley also noted, 'There was no realisation by any of the Europeans that a culture cannot be destroyed unless it is replaced by one which is meaningful in the eyes of those suffering the destruction'.[31] To even contemplate the replacement of a culture formed and adapted over millennia without allowing the Aborigines the time to change at their own pace was to spell doom to the People. As James Calder observed, 'after years of confinement at the Wyba-Luma [sic] settlement, they lost hope and fell into apathy.'[32]

The last superintendent of the Aboriginal Settlement at Wybalenna was the surgeon, Joseph Milligan, who replaced Dr Henry Jeanneret in June 1847. The settlement had been thrown into disarray by disputes between the superintendent and his officers, and as the result of the treatment of the Aborigines by Jenneret, which engendered the petition to Queen Victoria. Early in 1847 Van Diemen's Land was under the administration of Charles La Trobe, the superintendent of the Port Phillip district, in the absence of an appointed viceroy (caused by the recall of Sir John Eardley-Wilmot). La Trobe reported unfavourably on the state of Wybalenna, particularly as the result of the conduct of Jeanneret. Epidemics of catarrh and influenza were also sweeping the settlement. Partly for those reasons and as the result of the petition to the Queen, the Colonial Office directed the closure of the settlement and the repatriation of the Aborigines to Van Diemen's Land. The cost of maintaining the settlement for the forty-seven survivors was also a consideration, although newly-appointed Lieutenant-Governor Sir William Denison declared that 'he could not regard the closing of "Wybalenna" merely in terms of expense, but felt "it was due to the former owners of the soil that they should be carefully tended and kindly treated".'[33] One child having died beforehand, forty-six Aborigines – fourteen men, twenty-three women and nine children – were shipped to the former convict probation station at Oyster Cove, south of Hobart, in October 1847, arriving at their new place of confinement on 18th. Ten *Mairremmener* were among the repatriates, including

[31] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p. 215; also Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People*, pp. 169-174.
[32] Calder, *Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits, &c*, p. 42. James Backhouse Walker went further, claiming that 'the unhappy captives pined and died from "home sickness".' Walker, *Early Tasmania*, p. 242.
[33] Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, p. 162.

Kallerromter and Maccamee, two of the three killers of Thomas and Parker at Port Sorell in September 1831.[34]

Drawing the curtain: the last days at Oyster Cove

In April 1855, the surveyor and historian James Calder journeyed from Hobart Town to Oyster Cove for the specific purpose of examining the Aboriginal establishment, then under the superintendence of Joseph Milligan. Calder had over many years publicly demonstrated his profound sympathy for the Tasmanians, and his regret at the treatment meted out to them by the government and the settlers. On arriving at Oyster Cove, Calder observed the scene before him with considerable dismay, noting that;

> This establishment is a place so secluded, so completely away from all the chief thoroughfares of the island, and so rarely visited except by the inhabitants of the by-district it is placed in, chiefly sawyers and splitters, that I doubt its very existence is known to the great bulk of the community; or that on the shores of an unfrequented bay are still to be found the remnants of those men who for so many years successfully held their ground against their powerful invaders, with a pertinacity that will long be remembered by the colonists; and if it is recorded of them that they committed many acts of aggression on the settlers, it will at least be admitted that it was not by their hands that that the first blows were dealt, or the first blood drawn. These circumstances, now the strife is past, should make them objects of our particular solicitude. Is there, then, nothing that we owe them beyond a naked sustenance and a deserted barrack?[35]

At the time of Calder's visit there were just sixteen survivors from the forty-six repatriates; four men, twelve women and two boys. All were in poor health, superintendent Milligan reporting that 'three of the four men were drunkards ... one of the two boys was so intellectually obtuse that he could not be made useful', and 'the women were all more or less addicted to drink', and engaged in sexual intercourse with the white sawyers and splitters. Milligan had no useful suggestions to alleviate their suffering: little wonder, as he lived in Hobart Town, paying only short visits to the station.[36] The catechist at Flinders Island, Robert Clark, had joined the Oyster Cove establishment in the same role, with added duties as Milligan's on-site assistant. Thomas Manley was appointed Visiting Magistrate. Clark had a troubled relationship with Milligan and with staff and residents at the establishment, and was reprimanded by the government, dismissed, reappointed as storekeeper, and finally died in that office in March 1850. He added little to the care and well-being of the Aborigines, neglecting their welfare in order to follow outside pursuits. Manley's

[34] See Appendix 3 for the names of the *Mairremmener*.
[35] Calder, *Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits, &c*, p. 113.
[36] Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, pp. 172, 178, 179.

occasional visits also contributed little to the welfare of the residents. The truth of Calder's observations was apparent; the isolation of the station again returned the Aborigines to a state of invisibility, incarcerated in their remote location, living in dilapidated and unsanitary accommodation, and fading out of existence. As Plomley noted, it 'seemed that the only effect upon the Government of this deplorable state of affairs was to arouse its concern at the cost of running the establishment'.[37]

The situation changed to a degree upon the appointment of John Strange Dandridge as superintendent in July 1855, following the dismissal of Milligan after an adverse report from the new Visiting Magistrate, James Kirwan. However, Milligan was retained as the medical officer. His distant residence from Oyster Cove and infrequent visits did little to improve the well-being of the Aborigines. However, Dandridge, with the help of his wife, at the very least paid attention to the health of the residents and made numerous requests to the Government for funds for renovations and sanitary improvements to the station, few of which were approved. The steady decline in numbers continued, the result of the appalling conditions and lifestyle of the Aborigines, leading to the closure of the establishment in September 1869. The fate of the ten *Mairremmener* repatriates from 1847 until the closure is a measure of the neglect (and total lack of understanding of Aboriginal culture) accorded to that sorry remnant. Apart from the deaths of Purlurrepennenner (Emma) and Calamarowenye (Tippoo) already detailed above, Pieyenkomeyenyer (Wild Mary) of the *Lairmairrenener* died of a 'inflammation of the bowels' in 1851, probably forty-two years of age. Drunameliyer (Caroline), also of the *Lairmairrenener*, died of 'debility' aged 73 in 1860; and Wobbelty (Wapperty), who was the last *Mairremmener*-speaker, died in 1867, suffering from 'catarrh and debility'. No records have been found of the deaths of the other five – Dromedeenner (Mary) and Pairrerteemme (Goose) of the *Lunetinemairrener*, were alive in 1845. Maccamee (Washington) of the *Torererpunmairinnerpairener*, was last recorded in 1847. Maytepueminner (Maria) of the *Leetermairremener*, and Netaweerartheer (Lucy) of the *Lairmairrener*, were at the establishment in 1845. The last-named is the woman who claimed to have lived with Musquito during the time he was with the east coast bands. The absence of burial records alone indicated the lack of concern shown

[37] Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, p. 178. On the conditions at Oyster Cove, see Calder, pp. 42, 43.

by Milligan and the government. The recorded deaths were from relatively minor causes, exacerbated by the nature and quality of the medical care and old age.[38] The *Mairremmener* society, formed and adapted over thirty-five millennia, was at an end.

A final chapter? Tasmanian Aboriginal heritage reborn.

With the closure of the Oyster Cove Aboriginal establishment and the death of Trugernanna in 1876, history for a time shut the book on the Tasmanians – the view was held that the Aboriginal societies of the island were extinct. Even before the final deaths at Oyster Cove, the belief that extinction was inevitable was widespread. The man who was possibly most responsible for the tragedy that unfolded at Oyster Cove, the one-time superintendent and medical officer Joseph Milligan, claimed that;

> The day is not far distant when, according to the ordinary course of nature, the last of the surviving remnant of the aboriginal inhabitants of Tasmania, now maintained at a Government establishment, and a little more than a dozen in number, must be removed by death, and a distinct people cease to exist. The entire extinction of a population, an isolated strip of the human family, is neither a matter of every day occurrence nor of trivial import.[39]

John West, in witnessing 'the triumph of colonisation' in 1852, noted that;

> Such is the process [of colonisation] – it is carelessly remarked, that the native is seen less often; that it is long since he ventured to cross the last line, where death set up landmarks in the slain. At length the secret comes out: the tribe which welcomed the first settler with shouts and dancing, or at worst looked on with indifference, has ceased to live.[40]

James Bonwick, writing in 1870, summed up the Darwinian beliefs held at that time, when, in a chapter headed 'Decline, a Decree of Providence', he claimed that 'the Blacks go before the superior Caucasian race, as the old, gigantic Saurians before other types of beings, and we have but to shrug or shoulders and cry, "Poor fellows".'[41] James Calder, commenting on the death of 'Truganini' (Trugernanna), claimed that she had been the 'last survivor of a now wholly extinct nation'.[42] In

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[38] Details from Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, pp. 944, 945, and generally from the records of Aboriginal names in *Friendly Mission* and *Weep in Silence*. On the question of medical treatment of the residents, Peter Dowling examined the medical records of surgeon William Smith concerning three Aborigines – Wapperty, Mary Ann Arthur and Truggernanna – during the years 1858 to 1869, and noted the extensive use of compounds of mercury in treatment for respiratory illnesses in particular. These compounds were commonly-used medications of the time. Dowling hypothesised that mercury poisoning as the result may have contributed to the failing health and subsequent deaths of the residents so treated. P. Dowling, 'Mercury poisoning at Oyster Cove? Suspected cases of unintentional poisoning of Tasmanian Aboriginal internees', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, vol. 11, 2006, pp. 59-68.

[39] Milligan, *Vocabulary*, p. 5. His apparent concern is ironic, given his negligence in carrying out his duties.

[40] West, *The History of Tasmania*, pp. 332, 333.

[41] Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians*, p. 375.

[42] Calder, *Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits, &c*, p. 108; also correspondence between Calder and Premier Thomas Reiby, February 1877, concerning a memorial for Trugernanna. Calder Papers, Mitchell Library, Sydney. MS A587.

closing the first comprehensive anthropological study of the Tasmanians in 1890, H. Ling Roth noted that 'The sad and untimely destruction of this interesting primitive race is one of the greatest losses Anthropology has suffered'.[43] In 1949, the anthropologist Joseph Birdsell wrote a paper on 'The Racial Origin of the Extinct Tasmanians'. [44] Plomley, in publishing Robinson's journals in 1966, included an appendix entitled 'The causes of the extinction of the Tasmanians'.[45] As late as 1972, Sir William Crowther gave a paper to the Royal Australasian College of Physicians at Launceston entitled 'The final phase of the extinct Tasmanian race 1847-1876'.[46] Yet the pioneering anthropological studies of the Bass Strait Islanders by N. B. Tindale in 1937 and later by Tindale and Birdsell had demonstrated that, far from being an extinct race, the Tasmanians had survived through their female ancestors who were taken by the sealers. By 1987, Plomley acknowledged that the Bass Strait Islander community 'which has persisted to the present day', represented the descendants of the Tasmanians, albeit being 'mixed blood people'. He went even further, claiming that there were 'some mainland families [with] similar origins [whose] histories ... owing their origins to Tasmanian aboriginal women would be of interest'.[47]

The awareness of that heritage rapidly became a major social and political issue for those of Tasmanian Aboriginal descent, given that the last quarter of the twentieth century saw, throughout Australia, the vigorous assertion of Aboriginal

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[43] H. Ling Roth, *The Aborigines of Tasmania*, p. 228.
[44] Joseph B. Birdsell, 'The Racial Origin of the Extinct Tasmanians', *Records of the Queen Victoria Museum,* Launceston, 15 August 1949, pp. 105-122.
[45] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, pp. 964-967.
[46] William E. L. H. Crowther, 'The final phase of the extinct Tasmanian race 1847-1876', *Records of the Queen Victoria Museum No. 49*, Launceston, 1972.
[47] Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, p. 191. The question of Tasmanian Aboriginality is vexed and contested, the descendants of the Bass Strait Islanders claiming that they represent the true (and only) descendants of the Peoples of the north, north-west and north-east, and therefore are the only surviving Tasmanians. These descendants are known collectively as *Palawa* – see Taylor, *A Study of the Palawa Place Names*, p.1. None apparently claim descent from the *Mairremmener* People (Personal contact by the author with community members). The Lia Pootah Community, based in the Tasmanian south, claim descent from 'unrecorded Aboriginal women, who partnered with convicts, sawyers, soldiers, free settlers, farmers [and] were never removed from the land of their birth they called Trowerner'. The Lia Pootah claim 'Our cultural heritage defines [our] ancestral Kinship Groups as Teen Toomele Menennye (Big River) and Tahune Linah (Huon) ... Some are descended from those found at Bruny Island and the Toogee of Tasmania's West Coast. Other community members are descended from women whose ancestral Kinship ties are unknown but the descendants know their grannies came from areas like the East Coast, and the Central Highlands'. They are therefore claiming, in part, *Mairremmener* descent. The *Palawa* do not accept the claims of the Lia Pootah. The matter of Aboriginality is one for the communities concerned, and the author has made no attempt to investigate or verify any of the claims, other than the personal discussions noted above.
Lia Pootah website: http://www.tasmanianaboriginal.com.au/liapootah/index.htm, accessed 1 Sept. 2008

rights to native title, and the recognition of and a call for the need for reconciliation between black and white over the wrongs perpetrated against the Aborigines since white settlement. The formation of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Council (later the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land and Sea Council) were indicative of the development of social and political awareness and encouragement of Tasmanian Aboriginality and rights. The institution of a school of Indigenous studies – Riawunna – at the University of Tasmania was a further example of the growing awareness of Tasmanian Aboriginal history and culture. The Tasmanian State Government had, in more recent times, vested freehold title to land such as the Risdon Cove Historic Site, Cape Barren Island and other Bass Strait islands in the Land Council and other Aboriginal bodies; had made an apology as a form of reconciliation; and had instituted a compensation fund for the Aboriginal children taken from their families and their descendants. A group also representing Aboriginal Peoples in Tasmania – the Lia Pootah Community – is discussed in note 45 above.

The revival of interest in the Tasmanians resulted in the more recent archaeological and anthropological studies used in this thesis, and the very valuable linguistic analyses of John Taylor, also discussed, together with more recent histories giving the separate socio-linguistic groups appropriate recognition. The history of the *Mairremmener* People is of particular interest inasmuch as they were not only the largest of the socio-linguistic groups by population and band numbers, but were at the centre of the conflict between the Aborigines, the settlers and the military, and were the declared 'enemy' under martial law during the Black War of 1828-1830. Perhaps in the future, forensic evidence will establish with certainty whether the *Mairremmener* survived the brutal treatment meted out to them; until that time, the record of the brave defence of their country may serve to remind Australians of the injustices of the past, just as keenly as some contemporary historians sought to memorialise them in their own time. As early as 1831, James Erskine Calder noted that;

> Where is the man amongst ourselves who would not resist an invading enemy; who would not avenge the murder of his parents, the ill-usage of his wife and daughters and the spoilation of all his earthly goods by a foreign enemy ... he who did would be immortalized as a patriot ...

> Is there such an effect produced on the soul by wearing a black skin, that it converts into vices those acts and feelings which are virtuous when done ... under a white one? I think not ...[48]

Calder's words, those of an eyewitness to the terrible end of a once-vibrant society, should serve as the last in memory of the *Mairremmener* People.

[48] Calder, letter to the *Launceston Advertiser,* 22 September 1831.

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Appendix 1: comparative societies – the Absarokee (Crow) People and the !Kung (Basarwa).

The purpose of this appendix is to briefly explicate the histories of the two societies used as comparisons in chapter three of this study for the purposes of illustrating nomadism as a cultural choice, and to demonstrate the diversities of culture and cultural adaptation among nomadic hunter-gatherers.

1. The nomads of the Plains: the Absarokee (Crow) People of the United States of America

There is a close parallel between the migrations of humans onto the North American continent and the migrations to Tasmania. During the last glacial maximum in the late Pleistocene era, the Bering Strait between Siberia and Alaska was a plain similar to the Bassian Plain between the Australian mainland and Tasmania. Flooding of the Bering Strait plain began about 35,000 BP, and was complete by 10,000 BP. An accepted hypothesis is that humans and animals (including mammoths and the ancestors of the bison) began migrating across the partly-flooded plain around 18,000 BP, moving south along 'a kind of corridor between the Cordilleran and Laurentide ice sheets, a thoroughfare ...for hunters and the animals they hunted.'[1] Archaeological evidence of human and animal bones has been carbon-dated from 9,000 BP in West Texas. At the beginning of the Holocene era, around 8,000 BP, 'culture areas' had been established by humans over the continent. The anthropologist Alfred Kroeber defined seven culture areas – '"geographical units of culture" that correspond "to regional floras and faunas, which are accumulations of species but can also be viewed as summation entities"... [that is] a total ecology.'[2] The Early Archaic period of human settlement in the culture area known as the 'Prairie Plains' (from 5,000 BP) saw nomadic hunter-gatherers in familial bands using stone fluted-blade spears and knives, hafted onto wooden shafts, to hunt mammoth and other animals. The blades were

> a foot long and less than an inch thick, of translucent glass-like chalcedony, each face ... covered by narrow, shallow, rippling grooves, [proving] that many Indians of this period

[1] A. M. Josephy Jnr., 'The Centre of the Universe', *America in 1492: The World of the Indian Peoples Before the Arrival of Columbus*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993, p. 15.
[2] A. B. Kehoe, *North American Indians: A Comprehensive Account*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1981, p. 13. The foregoing and following account of the prehistoric settlement of North America is also from Kehoe, pp.1-8.

> mastered a knowledge of the properties of stones and a delicate control that was difficult to achieve.[3]

This technology – the 'Fluted Tradition' – persisted on the northern plains until it was probably displaced by the Woodland societies migrating from the east, who 'began to influence the Prairie-Plains region about 500 BC [2500 BP]' when notched spear points 'somewhat larger than the usual Plains Archaic points came into fashion.' These migrants were semi-nomadic, with villages along the Missouri River, and in the tributary river valleys. Their habitations were 'oval pole wigwams ... supplanted by hide tipis when the community was out on an extended hunt. Bison were the principal source of food, with elk, deer, antelope, bear, beaver, and grouse also taken.' [4] A particular point of note were the funerary practices of these peoples, where the corpses were disarticulated and bundled at the place of death and transported to the village, where they were buried in cemetery mounds together with 'ornaments and utilitarian artefacts' including marine shells and copper beads, '[attesting] that the Plains Woodland were in the Hopewell trade network', a point reinforced by archaeological finds of fine chipping stones from other localities.[5] A major cultural change took place around 1750 BP, when arrow points appeared on the north-western Plains. The introduction of the bow at this time was an indication of the assimilation of Apachean culture from the Canadian forests to the north. The bow and arrow initiated great changes in hunting methods, and a limited form of agriculture was also introduced with the growing of maize.[6]

At the end of the Archaic and Woodland Periods, the Native Americans of the Plains were primarily eastern peoples who had migrated west from around 850 BP, displacing the Archaic peoples. The newcomers were Siouan speakers, moving along the Missouri River, probably following trade routes, and bringing a sedentary culture based on permanent fortified villages and extensive agriculture, including 'the raising of maize, beans, squashes, chenopods, amaranth, and ... sunflowers.' Hunting remained an important part of their economy, not merely for food: Kehoe noted that the bison shoulder blade bone was used as an agricultural hoe, an interesting

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[3] Kehoe, *North American* Indians, pp. 14, 15.
[4] p. 274.
[5] p. 275. The Hopewell trade network operated among the eastern peoples, throughout 'thousands of villages ... in which material goods were moved in the service of political leaders' p. 158.
[6] p. 275.

adaptation of the toolkit. The habitations were 'substantial rectangular houses ... framed with wooden posts ... and covered in earth.' They had internal hearths for cooking and heating, and were constructed 'on bluffs above the river plain.' [7] By 550 BP, villages contained as many as one hundred houses, now constructed in an earth-insulated circular style. Excavations at these late prehistoric villages have revealed European trade items.[8] Considerable acculturation had taken place, the result of contact with Apachean migrants heading south, and with Uto-Aztecan peoples – the Shoshoni in particular –who hunted along the southern territorial boundaries. There were also indications of artefacts resulting from trade with early European trappers and explorers late in the era. However, the peoples of the middle Missouri remained Siouan speakers, and a principal socio-cultural group were the Mandans, joined by fellow-Siouan, the Hidatsa, around 450 BP.[9] The Hidatsa '[were] said to have been nomadic bison hunters ... in central North Dakota' separating from the sedentary bands and '[living] in tipis, devoting themselves to hunting around the headwaters of the Missouri in south-central Montana and adjacent Wyoming'.[10] One of the three bands of the Hidatsa came to be known as 'Absarokee' or 'Crow', trading with other Hidatsa. The only agricultural pursuit the Absarokee maintained was the growing of tobacco 'for religious ceremonies.'[11]

A form of acculturation by incorporation among the Plains Indians occurred in the middle of the seventeenth century, when the tribes of the southern Plains acquired horses from neighbouring Spanish settlements in the present New Mexico. Prior to the horse arriving on the Plains the only domesticated animals utilised by the peoples were two species of dog – a 'larger wolf-like and a smaller coyotelike'. The dogs were kept as pets, were eaten by some peoples (the Absarokee having ' a strong disinclination to do so'), but were mainly used as animals of burden, carrying loads on

[7] Kehoe, *North American Indians*, pp. 275, 276.
[8] p. 276.
[9] p. 276, 281.
[10] p. 279.
[11] p. 279. Jonathan Lear pointed out that the People were (and are) known to themselves as 'Absarokee' (or 'Apsàalooke') which, in their language, means 'children of the Large-Beaked Bird.' The French (possibly mistakenly) took this bird to be the crow, giving the people the name 'Le Corbeau'. J. Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006, p. 11.

their backs or pulling a sled-type vehicle the French called a 'travois'. Absarokee households often had up to twenty dogs.[12]

A cultural change came with the introduction of the horse, which was the most important form of cultural incorporation by the Plains peoples. From an economic point of view it provided not only a form of mobility suited to both nomadic and sedentary cultures for hunting, transportation (the horse soon took the place of the dog) and migration, but also provided an invaluable trade item, exploited with great efficiency as the Indians became skilled horse breeders. The movement of the horse northwards into the northern Plains was relatively slow, only reaching the Dakotas in the 1770's, but was then rapidly adopted by the Absarokee, who obtained horses by trade or theft from neighbouring tribes.[13] The role of the horse in Indian culture extended well beyond the economic: '[men] paid for a ceremonial privilege with a horse, and a suitor might offer ten horses for a virtuous girl. Social standing could be enhanced by giving away ... or [lending] to those less favoured'.[14] The horse also played an important role in Absarokee religion. Joseph Medicine Crow noted that

> the Crows attributed to the horse ... supernatural powers and regarded it as an emissary and agent of the Great Power. Many Crow medicine men attributed their gift powers to the horse ... They were blessed with the strength, stamina, speed, and agility of the horse.[15]

Lowie claimed the horse was eaten only in times of great exigency, and never milked. A negative aspect and one Lowie claimed may have proved an obstacle to population growth among the northern peoples, was the horse's competition with the bison for pasture grass, particularly on the colder northern Plains, where winter growth was minimal.[16] The use of the horse in warfare was frequently celebrated in paintings on tipi covers.[17] As cultural traits, horses and horsemanship became 'symbol as well as key' in Indian culture.[18]

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[12] Robert H. Lowie, *Indians of the Plains*, New York: American Museum of Natural Sciences, 1963, pp. 39-44. In 1833 the Mandan were noted using dogs to pull snow sleds. Lowie considered this to be an incorporation of 'alien derivation', a very important cultural adaptation nonetheless. p. 48.
[13] p. 42, 43. Kehoe, *North American Indians,* pp. 278, 279. The successful theft of horses was a measure of bravery.
[14] p. 45.
[15] Joseph Medicine Crow, *From the Heart of Crow Country: The Crow Indians' Own Stories,* Lincoln; University of Nebraska Press, 1992, p. 102.
[16] p. 46.
[17] p. 120.
[18] Kehoe, *North American Indians,* p. 279.

The second vital form of incorporation was the firearm. Guns were acquired from French and British settlers and trappers in the Northeast by trade in furs from the mid-seventeenth century. The Iroquois Nations and other peoples who congregated each summer at the Great Lakes freely obtained muskets from the British trading centre at Albany. These weapons in turn found their way by further trade along the southern and western trade routes, and were used against the British settlers during King Phillip's War in 1675.[19] However, as Lowie pointed out, until the introduction of the rifle and more advanced firearms, the bow was often used in preference to the musket, as the musket was 'difficult to load on horseback and could not be fired with equal rapidity.' [20] Firearms combined with horses enabled the Plains peoples to kill larger numbers of game animals, the horses used to surround bison and herd them into a corral, the firearms (and bows) to dispatch vast numbers of the beasts.[21] In addition, when the horse first appeared on the northern plains, iron weapons and tools accompanied them as trade items acquired by the Shoshoni from the Spaniards. Knives, arrow and lance points and other iron tools, and soft goods and ornaments such as blankets and glass beads were rapidly incorporated into Absarokee culture.[22]

The nomads of the Plains: the Absarokee

The country of the Absarokee was on the northern Plains, with the Yellowstone River in the north, the Rocky Mountains and Yellowstone Lake to the west, and the Powder River along the eastern boundary. The Wind River and Rattlesnake Mountains formed the southern boundary. The neighbouring Peoples included the Shoshoni and Cheyenne to the south, the Blackfeet, Gros Ventre and Assiniboin to the north, and the Hidatsa and Lakota to the east. All of these peoples spoke different languages, although those Siouan-based included similar words to the Absarokee language. Trade often took place, and wars and minor skirmishes were not infrequent, often over disputed territory or horses. Although relatively small in number and facing 'overwhelming odds, [the Absarokee] held fast to an area desired by many [and] prospered, becoming "perhaps the richest nation in horses of any

[19] Kehoe, *North American Indians,* pp. 238, 240, 241.
[20] Lowie, *Indians of the Plains,* pp. 75, 76. The Tasmanian Aborigines eschewed the use of the musket in favour of their spears for similar reasons, particularly because of the time taken in loading and firing, and relative uselessness in wet weather.
[21] p. 45; Kehoe, *North American Indians,* pp. 290, 291.
[22] Robert Lowie, *The Crow Indians*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Books, 1935, Bison Books Edition 1983, p. xix.

residing east of the Rocky Mountains".'[23] The northern Plains consist of a high semiarid plateau lying in a rain shadow created by the Rocky Mountains, resulting in relatively-low rainfall. The precipitation was sufficient for the growth of grasslands but did not support afforestation, resulting in open savannah ranged by huge bison herds. As the plains rose into the mountains, other grazing mammals such as the elk, deer and antelope were found. Small mammals in the grasslands included prairie dogs and coyotes. The rattlesnake was the predominant reptile. Birds hunted by the Absarokee for food included the prairie chicken, but other birds were snared for their feathers. The sedentary tribes fished the rivers using traps, spears and arrows, but fish appeared to be of little interest to the nomadic peoples such as the Absarokee. The edible plants gathered included the wild turnip, wild rhubarb, berries and chokecherries. The sedentary bands practised agriculture, fishing, growing crops such as maize (a staple), beans, squash and pumpkins, much produce being exchanged between the farmers and the nomads.[24] As noted above, tobacco was grown by most bands, especially for its role in the spiritual life of the peoples. The bison provided the bulk of the diet of the nomadic Plains peoples, and particularly of the Absarokee. The great herds of bison on the Plains were central to the culture of the People. In an economic sense alone, its skin provided the primary item of trade, the covering for tipis, and for clothing, and the animal itself, like the horse, played a major role in the spiritual life of the Absarokee. In their world, 'spiritual creative forces act[ed] not only through the natural world but through human beings as well; human beings [were] not simply acted upon by the spiritual.'[25]

Lowie, whose ethnographies of the Absarokee represent fieldwork carried out over twenty-five years of living and working amongst the tribal bands, noted that the religion of the People was, to a major extent, a matter of individual beliefs, influenced by general social constructions within tribal folklore. Lowie claimed that

> [the individual] may believe what he will as to creation, cosmology, and the hereafter; he is not coerced to worship this or that deity [but] guided only by his own specific vision, personally or vicariously experienced. Yet in reality he cannot escape the subtle influences of social tradition.[26]

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[23] R. Frey, *The World of the Crow Indians: As Driftwood Lodges*, Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1987, p. 21.
[24] Lowie, *Indians of the Plains,* pp. 1-4, 13-23.
[25] Frey, *The World of the Crow Indians,* pp. 12-14, 178.
[26] Lowie, *The Crow Indians,* p. 254.

Visions received through dreams or induced trances formed the basis of the individual's (and hence, societal) beliefs. However, many common features abounded, such as the acceptance of the value of interventions by totem flora or fauna, and particularly in role of the Sun – 'the great Crow diety' – in intercession on behalf of the People.[27] Ceremonial dance featured at large in Absarokee religion, the premier celebration being the Sun-dance, a ceremony common to many of the Prairie tribes. This dance was a 'prayer for vengeance', the seeking of retribution for wrongs, real and imagined, visited on the People. Led by the tribal medicine-man (or shaman), the dancers passed into a number of revelatory states from which future actions were determined, including engaging in wars. Other ceremonies included a 'Cooked-Meat Festival', involving the passing of sacred stones, singing, and finally the sharing of a meat meal. The purpose appeared to be for the granting of good fortune, but carried the deeper role of binding the tribal units together. A 'Bear Song Dance' involved evoking the spirit of a sacred animal from the human form in order to stimulate a future action; and the 'Sacred Pipe Dance' involving dancing, singing and the passing of a pipe for the purpose of pacification of violent passions – hence the later interpretations of smoking as passing a "peace-pipe". One of the most important ceremonies (apart from the Sun-dance) was performed by the 'Tobacco Society', which had a series of chapters in Absarokee society, each aimed at achieving revelation through the smoking of tobacco, which held a vital place in cosmology, being (at least in one version of creation mythology) the first living thing created on earth.[28]

The 'Creator' in Absarokee mythology was 'Old Man Coyote'; a supernatural that Lowie noted may or may not have been synonymous with the Sun. In one creation myth, Old Man Coyote 'took dirt and blew on it [and] forthwith made the earth. He traced rivers, he made water. [The] dirt he took, he made persons. After a while he made females.'[29] Joseph Medicine Crow noted that Old Man Coyote was the supernatural prayed to at times of great exigency, as when the Absarokee were at war with the Sioux. In calling for relief, an old woman prayed for 'Old Man Coyote,

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[27] Lowie, *The Crow Indians,* p. 297. The preceding and following descriptions of Absarokee cosmology and religion are taken from Lowie, and from Joseph Medicine Crow, *From the Heart of Crow Country: the Crow Indians' own stories*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992.
[28] Lowie, *The Crow Indians*, pp. 274-296.
[29] pp. 123, 124; Frey, *The World of the Crow Indians, op. cit.*, p. 9.

teacher and benefactor of the Absarokee people ... to come and help us survive this very day.' The spirit appeared in the form of a warrior, 'and stampeded the enemy'.[30]

From this brief description of a very involved cosmology and spirituality, it can be seen that the Absarokee led an intricate and individualised spiritual life. The tribal structure was equally complicated. While being one socio-linguist group, the Absarokee were divided into three bands, each 'politically distinct'[31]. The band leader was, as in many nomadic hunter-gatherer societies, a man of proven outstanding leadership qualities, usually achieved in warfare. In the Absarokee language, the leader was known as '*batsé tse*' – the 'good' or 'valiant' man. The men of the band were formed into a number of military clubs, each club taking turns as tribal police enforcing the social rules of the band, but particularly regulating the communal bison hunt, and directing the war parties organised to raid other tribes. The kinship was matrilineal, children taking their mother's band name, and conjugal relations were exogamous, marriage within bands being strictly forbidden. Relationships were not monogamous; a man often took a number of partners. Frederick Hoxie noted old men who had married up to ten times by the age of seventy, thus polygyny was an accepted practice.[32] Hoxie examined the first census taken of Absarokee population in the reservation era in 1884, identifying 415 families in twenty-seven bands in a total population of 2,682, making the average family size a little over six, and the average band size about one hundred. Family groups included children and, at times, grandparents. At the time the first Crow Agency was established in 1880, population was estimated at 3,470. Frey claimed that, prior to contact with the colonizers, the Absarokee population was sixteen thousand, reduced by a series of smallpox epidemics to the 1880 estimate.[33] As in all hunting and gathering societies, the division of labour was fixed and certain. Men hunted, and were the warriors; women gathered and carried out the domestic duties: however, women participated in religious ceremonies, and, at times, engaged in some form in the wars with other tribes. The matrilineality of their society gave the women a considerable amount of power. Hoxie noted that of fifteen wills filed by Absarokee women between 1910 and

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[30] Joseph Medicine Crow, *From the Heart of Crow Country,* pp. 77-78.
[31] Lowie, *The Crow Indians,* p.5. Again, Lowie forms the source of much of this description that follows.
[32] Frederick E. Hoxie, 'Searching for Structure: Reconstructing Crow Family Life during the Reservation Era', *American Indian Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 3, (Summer 1991), p. 307,Table 14.
[33] p. 290; Frey, *The World of the Crow Indians,* p. 30.

1915, only three left anything to their husbands.[34] The nomadic life of the Absarokee was by choice. Their immediate neighbours to the east and to the north included sedentary peoples whose villages had been maintained in the one location for centuries, and whose economies were intertwined with the Absarokee, with considerable trade in animal skins for food and other goods. However, the end of this unique hunter-gatherer society was nigh; as the result of the settler invasion and the reservation system the complete and fulfilling cultural life of the Absarokee was about to come to a sudden end.

The diverse hunters and gatherers of the Kalahari: the nomads of southern Africa.

The current archaeological and anthropological consensus places modern human beginnings in sub-Saharan Africa in the Middle Stone Age. For example, the excavations at the White Paintings rock shelter in the Tsodilo Hills in the Western Desert of Botswana suggested, from thermoluminescent dating, a sequence of at least 100,000 years. An assemblage of 'well-made unifacial and bifacial points' were found at the base of the excavation, together with faunal remains and fish bones.[35] The *Recent African Origin Theory* 'argues that the first fully modern people evolved in Africa around 200,000 years ago.'[36] Sub-Saharan hunter-gatherer societies have survived through millennia, experiencing 'a long and influential contact with others; often marginalized, they retain a cultural persona and situational cultural boundary as hunter-gatherers.'[37] As Sibel Kusimba noted, '[ethnography] and history [tells] of many processes by which the descendants of later Stone Age hunter-gatherers continued foraging practices [while] sharing their territories with food producing neighbours, changing their food-getting strategies and social interactions to increase complementarity and exchange', a process of symbiosis. Other anthropologists have argued that, in the Kalahari Desert for example, the hunter-gatherers and the herders were not two distinct societies, but one, the former being a subservient client of the

[34] Hoxie, 'Searching for Structure', p. 306.
[35] R. E. Donahue, M.L. Murphy & L. H. Robbins, 'Lithic Microwear Analysis of Middle Stone Age Artifacts from White Paintings Rock Shelter, Botswana', *Journal of Field Archaeology*, vol. 29, no.1/2 (Spring-Summer, 2004), pp. 156, 157.
[36] S. B. Kusimba, 'What is a hunter-gatherer? Variation in the archaeological record of eastern and southern Africa', *Journal of Archaeological Research*, vol. 13, no. 4, December 2005, p. 342.
[37] p. 340.

latter.[38] These views represent the two sides of the persisting debate on the definition of "hunter-gatherer". Susan Kent, in reviewing this debate, made the point that

> we can accept that at one time in the past there were people who exclusively hunted and gathered wild products with no reliance on, or knowledge of, domesticates, but those people are as extinct as is the Paleolithic.

However, she added that modern hunter-gathers 'all depend to various degrees on domesticates'; others are still primarily foragers, whose 'language, religious rituals, mode of socialization, orientation towards labour, gender relations and attitudes, political structures' and other aspects differ significantly from their pastoralist neighbours.[39] The debate is based on generalizations and on the definition of hunter-gatherers as a type, ignoring the observations of diversity among them from prehistoric to contemporary times. As Kusimba has now noted, new "types" such as 'peripatetic hunter-gathers', and 'forager-traders' have become part of the literature. Rather than put hunter-gatherers on one or other side of the debate, the 'consensus view has been to retain the concept of the hunter-gatherer but to emphasize its diversity.'[40]

Of the surviving nomadic hunter-gatherer societies in the twentieth century, few have been the subject of more intense anthropological and archaeological research and polemical debate than the San or Basarwa Peoples of the Kalahari Desert in Botswana and Namibia.[41] These peoples serve as an example of the diversity that existed among prehistoric and modern hunter-gatherers and the problems arising from attempts at categorisation. The Kalahari, an estimated 930,000 square kilometres in area, occupies all of the northern part of Botswana, the eastern part of Namibia, and a small part of the north of Northern Cape Province of South Africa. It is approximately 1,600 kilometres from north to south, and 600 kilometres east to west.[42] The Desert is

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[38] pp. 346, 348.

[39] S. Kent, 'The Current Forager Controversy: Real versus Ideal Views of Hunter-Gatherers', *Man*, New Series, vol. 27, no. 1 (March 1992), p. 61.

[40] Kusimba, 'What is a hunter-gatherer?', p. 354.

[41] The names given to these Peoples have varied over decades of study. Susan Kent pointed out that the terms 'Bushmen' and 'San' carry derogatory meanings: the first is English, the second Khoikhoi (Hotentot). She noted that one of the official languages of Botswana – Setswana – uses the term 'Basarwa' for the peoples, the word meaning 'people of the wilderness', and both the Peoples themselves and Botswanans generally accept the term 'not necessarily in a disparaging way.' Kent, 'The Current Forager Controversy' p. 62, n.1. For that reason, I propose to use the term 'Basarwa' in this thesis.

[42] The description of the Kalahari that follows is taken from R. B. Lee & I. DeVore (eds), *Kalahari Hunter-Gatherers: Studies of the !Kung San and Their Neighbors*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976, pp. 28-42.

an elevated basin formed during the Tertiary era, covered with a mantle of sand, and with dry rivers carrying water only after exceptional rains in the upper catchments. The river bed pans provide a standing source of water on a semi-permanent basis. The dry rivers are also the source of underground water throughout the year, accessed by wells drilled into the substrata. The northern Kalahari, where the peoples of this study are situated, has a mean elevation of 1,100 metres above sea level. The climate is characterised by hot summers with a mean temperature of 38° C. There is a four to six-month rainy season, with rainfall ranging from 230mm to 600mm. This rainfall represents the total precipitation in the Desert. The winters are moderate to cool and dry, with mean daytime temperatures of 25° C and near-freezing nights. There are more than 500 species of plants and animals in the region, of which the Basarwa utilise 150 plants and 100 species of animals. The plants used include thirty species of roots and bulbs, thirty species of berries and fruits, and 'an assortment of melons, nuts, leafy greens, and edible gums.'[43] The animals include large mammals such as the giraffe, kudu, eland, roan antelope, gemsbok, wildebeest and hartebeest. Small mammals include the steenbok, duiker, warthogs, springhares, porcupine, antbears, foxes, genet and aardwolf. Game birds include guinea fowl, francolin and bustard. Reptiles used as food include rock pythons and tortoise. Ants appear to be the only insect sought for food.[44] The desert also contains animals of prey such as lions, leopards, cheetahs, wild dogs and hyenas competing in food quest, together with such small carnivores as caracul, wildcats, jackals and mongoose. From the foregoing it is apparent that the flora and fauna of this area (known as "Dobe") is relatively varied and generally abundant, providing the necessary resources for successful hunter-gather subsistence, even in competition with the multiplicity of predators.

Enduring hunter-gathers: the !Kung People

Dobe, an area of approximately 11,000 km², is the country of the !Kung People, who have been a focus of the controversial hunter-gatherer debate. Susan Kent pointed out that, of the people of the Kalahari,

> Basarwa groups differ in language, kinship, religion, settlement patterns, economy and historical circumstances ... For instance, whereas Basarwa speak a click language, the different linguistic groups are not mutually intelligible; thus, a Nharo speaker cannot necessarily understand a !Xõ or !Kung speaker.

[43] Lee & DeVore, *Kalahari Hunter-Gatherers,* pp. 37, 38.
[44] pp.39-42.

The Bantu-speaking pastoralists who are the neighbours of the Basarwa 'have interacted with [them] to some degree for a long time', but the interaction varies from 'one part of the Kalahari to another, as do the specific Bantu-speaking groups involved.'[45] At times the Basarwa have been portrayed as 'serfs' of the Bantu-speakers, an 'impoverished rural underclass' dispossessed by the pastoralists[46]; and at other times as pastoralists themselves, husbanding cattle and goats.[47] On the other hand, Richard Lee and Matthias Guenther, in rejecting the 'serf' arguments, noted that, in respect of the !Kung people of the Dobe region,

> [early ethnographic] accounts offer glimpses of a relatively resilient and opportunist hunting and gathering adaptation not in isolation from the wider world but in contact with it. This resilience continued to be part of the !Kung reality in the 1950s and 1960s; even by that late date the !Kung were a going concern with a number of key institutions – kinship, language, rituals – intact.[48]

In fact, the respective proponents of the contesting views were really not far apart, reflecting the diversity argument. Wilmsem and Denbow argued that, rather than looking at peoples as 'encased in "cultures" in closed societies', they should be seen as 'engaged in social formations continuously shaped in an arena of economic and political action.' Lee and Guenther acknowledged that '[it] is not a question of whether *some* San peoples *somewhere* in the Kalahari were serfs of black overlords or victims of European trading (and slaving) practices ...'[49] The isolation and relative intactness of the !Kung People of the Basarwa and their culture provided a opportunity to examine the attributes of a culturally-adaptive nomadic hunter-gatherer society, with all the diversity observed between them and the other Basarwa peoples.

As in the case of the Tasmanians, language is a valuable indicator of the manner in which societies formed in the Kalahari. Alan Barnard noted twenty-three dialects which he considered comprised the Khoisan family of languages, embracing the peoples of south western and south central Africa. Of these, Barnard identified twelve as related to the tribal structure of the Basarwa, three of those directly related

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[45] Kent, 'The Current Forager Controversy', p. 50. Note the similarity with language differences in Van Diemen's Land.

[46] p. 50; Edwin N. Wilmsem & James Denbow, 'Paradigmatic History of San-Speaking Peoples and the Current Attempts at Revision [and Comments and Replies]', *Current Anthropology*, vol. 31, no. 5, December 1990, pp. 496, 500, and reply by Richard B. Lee, p.512.

[47] Wilmsem & Denbow, 'Paradigmatic History', p. 490.

[48] Richard B. Lee & Mathias Guether, 'Problems in Kalahari Historical Ethnography and the Tolerance of Error', *History in Africa*', vol. 20, 1993, p.225.

[49] Wilmsen & Denbow. 'Paradigmatic History', p. 499; Lee & Guenther, *ibid.*, p. 188. Authors' emphasis.

to !Kung speakers. The dialect which pertains directly to the !Kung people of the Dobe area is designated as 'Zu/'hõasi'.[50] Barnard's analysis predated the work of archaeologists such as Donahue *et al.*, noted above, and he was not, in the absence of conclusive archaeological evidence, prepared to date the arrival of early peoples in the Kalahari, other than to conclude that 'through the evidence of linguist diversity we can at least assume that present groups are not descended from a recent ancestral linguist stock', and '[it] is likely that most non-Khoe speaking Kalahari groups have occupied their present locations for many thousands of years.'[51] Barnard noted that early writers on the peoples of the Kalahari, using legends and now-dated linguistics, assumed that they had migrated from the north. However, it would now appear from recent archaeology that human occupation of the area is as old as any known on the planet.[52]

Barnard drew a kinship structure of the hunter-gather society of the !Kung from ethnographic observations of relatively contemporary times. He concluded that the Basarwa rejected a kin classification of band membership, having 'a notion that people can and must identify *everyone* as belonging to one category or another ... there is no such thing as non-kinship. A [universal] kin classification affords many hunting and gatherering societies the mechanism for distributing both moveable property and rights over natural resources.'[53] This categorisation accords with the earlier work of Lee, who concluded that the basic social grouping was the band, 'a noncorporate, bilaterally organized group of people who live in a single settlement, and who move together for at least part of the year.' The group consisted of 'two, three, or more siblings and/or cousins, both male and female, who are generally acknowledged to be owners of the waterhole' and the block of land surrounding it. The surrounding land contained the immediate food resources for subsistence.[54] There was no 'headman', the group holding the land communally, and inheritance could be both patrilineal and matrilineal. While marriage appeared to be exogamous, it was not

[50] A. Barnard, "Kinship, Language and Production: A Conjectural History of Khoisan Social Structure', *Journal of the International African Institute*, vol. 58, no. 1, 1988, pp. 29, 30. Barnard's use of "Khoisan" embraces Hottentot as well as Barsawa ('Bushmen').
[51] Barnard, 'Kinship, Language and Production', p. 34.
[52] Donahue *et al.*, 'Lithic Microwear Analysis', p. 156.
[53] Barnard, 'Kinship, Language and Production, p. 45. The parallel to Tasmanian societies can clearly be seen.
[54] Lee & DeVore, *Kalahari Hunters and Gatherers,* p. 77.

patrilocal, couples living with either parents, or even with other bands.[55] Resources within the owned block were frequently shared with other bands, and especially between relatives. Lee accounted for this flexibility as being due to the variability in the supply of water and the frequent droughts that demanded sharing of resources.[56] In fact, in exceptionally dry seasons, bands converged in order to survive. Population density was relatively low, given the environment and the resources, with the Dobe area occupied by only eleven bands.[57] Band size approximated twenty-four persons, equally divided between male and female.[58] The diet of the !Kung consisted predominantly of vegetable foods, only forty percent being meat, which John Yelland considered to be the result of the scarcity of large game and the difficulty in hunting what little was available, whereas vegetable foods were plentiful. He also observed anthropogenic firing of large areas in late winter and early spring, perversely during the seasons when no rain was expected, ensuring that such fires would not promote the development of grasslands; on the contrary, the fires resulted in the reduction of pasture and the promotion of shrub growth.[59] The hunting methods of the !Kung (at least until the 1960s) consisted of the use of bows and poisoned arrows, no attempt having been made to adopt the firearms used by their southern Bantu neighbours. The methods employed also included the taking of burrowing mammals by the use of long spears.[60] The !Kung habitations consisted of up to a dozen or more huts drawn into camps, each hut containing a hearth group of immediate family – husband, wife and children. In rainy-season camps the huts were 'circular in shape, slightly under two meters in height, and about two meters in diameter', constructed from branches and covered in a thick layer of grass. The dry season huts were usually 'no more than a few leafy branches stuck in the ground to provide shade.'[61] The !Kung toolkit included the bows and poisoned arrows and hunting spears previously mentioned, and, in prehistoric times, stone blades and double-backed points of chert and jasper. Cutting tools and spears were hafted. In the modern era, iron knives, axes and adzes formed the core of the !Kung toolkit, and 'were never left behind.' [62] This toolkit

[55] pp. 78, 268, 269.
[56] pp.78-84.
[57] Lee & DeVore, *Kalahari Hunter-Gatherers,* pp. 85-94.
[58] Yellen in Lee & DeVore, pp. 60,61.
[59] p. 44.
[60] pp. 42, 45.
[61] pp. 63, 64.
[62] p. 65; Donahue, *et al.,* 'Lithic Microwear Analysis', pp. 157-160.

adaptation is a classic example of incorporation by the !Kung, the iron tools obviously being acquired by trade from their herding neighbours.

A cultural trait that resonates with the culture of the Tasmanians was the mining and ceremonial use of haematite, or ochre. Lawrence Robbins and others carried out an archaeological survey of the Tsolido Hills in north-western Botswana in 1998, examining twenty mine sites dating from 1300 BP. Ochre was widely used as a bodily adornment across the whole of southern Africa, an explorer in 1846 noting that 'the members of the different Bechuana tribes often smear their bodies with fat and red ochre, and cover their hair with a paste consisting of black lead-ore, called sibilo, till their heads shine with it as if ... they wore metal skull-caps.'[63] The Tsolido Hills are in close proximity to the Dobe area. Lorna Marshall noted the use of eland fat as an adornment during an expedition to the Dobe area in 1958, but made no mention of ochre or 'sibilo'; it may be the practice had been abandoned by that time. However, she noted ornaments of ostrich shell beads and necklaces. She also observed the common musical instrument in use called '//gwashi', which consisted of a 'well-shaped wooden bowl; a long string of dance rattles, noting that '[they] have developed music and dancing but not the plastic or pictorial arts.'[64]

The !Kung cosmology was structured around an individual man-god (Kauha) living first on earth, but then ascending into the sky, and whose interactions with humans and role in the human life-cycle centred on creation stories usually told by the elders of the People (although story-telling was open to all members of society).[65] The stories emphasised the origins of sex, death and renewal (birth); the creation of animals and hunting and gathering; and the division of the social world of the !Kung – particularly the division between themselves and their herder neighbours. The story which related to this social division painted the !Kung as ignorant of the practices and value of pastoralism and agriculture, and ended with the plaint 'Thus Karã/'túma [the perpetrator of the foolish action] ruined us; that day he spoiled the chances of our

[63] L. H. Robbins, M. L. Murphy, A. C. Campbell & G. A. Brook, 'Intensive Mining of Specular Hematite in the Kalahari ca. A.D. 800-1000', *Current Anthropology*, vol. 39, no. 1, February 1998, pp.146, 147. 'Bechuana' was the colonial name for the present Botswana.
[64] L. Marshall in Lee & DeVore, *Kalahari Hunter-Gatherers*, p. 364-366.
[65] The cosmology of the !Kung is taken from Megan Biesele, 'Aspects of !Kung Folklore' & Richard Katz '!Kia-healing with the Kalahari !Kung', Lee & DeVore, pp.282-324.

people for all time.'[66] The man-god was a trickster, whose aim was to fool or deceive those with whom he was involved, but the stories normally included an instructive moral. The role of gods was also invoked in the religion of the !Kung, which centred around acquiring a state of transcendence called !kia. The state was achieved through the medium of a healing dance during which an energy known as 'n/um' was released – an energy which could cure sicknesses and protect the dancers from misfortune. The dance was 'the !Kung's primary expression of religious experience', and was open to all adult men, although the whole population of the village would participate in some form. The dance was first taught to man by the gods, but later by n/um masters, who became the guardians of the ritual. The dancers had to be adults in their twenties to be eligible to learn the ritual. The special role of the !kia was the passage into adulthood. The dance was a process of death and rebirth, 'a passage into the unknown [where] the boy becomes a man.'[67] The spiritual life of the !Kung was therefore not only elaborate, but all-embracing of their society.

On the issue of nomadism as a cultural trait, Lee, in dismissing the view that their mobility was socially determined, held that the nomadism of the !Kung was simply a factor of their economy. He claimed that the

> [keeping] up distant social ties against a possible future need and visiting neighbours who owe favours from previous years are only two of the factors that set hunter groups in motion. The ostensible purposes are social, but the underlying rationale is adaptive.[68]

However, in contrast, Guenther noted that the 'San' [Basarwa] who had been incorporated into farm life, continued

> the traditional transhumance pattern of seasonal concentration and dispersal [which] still marks [their] yearly cycle ... they alternate between living in large villages as farm laborers during the dry season, and hunting and gatherering in small groups in the bush during the wet season ... the pattern of mobility is still a fundamental feature of the socioeconomic adaptation of the farm San.[69]

That is to say, the factors that impelled the !Kung to maintain a nomadic culture were certainly more than economic, as were the factors impelling the other hunter-gatherers in this study. The overall picture of the !Kung as a nomadic society of hunter-gatherers is one that suggest a full cultural life, not dissimilar to the Tasmanians: a relatively closed society, with a highly developed cosmology and persistent cultural

[66] Biesele in Lee & DeVore, p. 323.
[67] Katz in Lee & DeVore, pp. 286-288, 295, 300.
[68] Lee & DeVore, pp. 95, 96.
[69] Guenther in Lee & DeVore, p. 124.

adaptations and incorporations, sometimes due to contact with other societies over millennia.

The culture of the !Kung outlined above was drawn from the ethnographic observations of anthropologists in the twentieth century, allied to archaeological investigations, and the objection may be raised that cultural adaptation or forms of acculturation may have taken place to shape and reshape !Kung society over the millennia of their occupation of the Dobe area. However, as Yellen pointed out, the use of analogy is the only method the archaeologist has when recovering the prehistory of ancient societies, and in the case of the !Kung,

> [given] that environmental conditions during the late Stone Age prevail today, and that the present !Kung are probably directly descended from these prehistoric ancestors, the analogies drawn are probably valid.[70]

This view was echoed by Kusimba, when he noted that '[ethnographic] analogy is still the most important means of interpreting African hunter-gatherer archaeology'.[71]
The very isolation of the country of the !Kung in a distant corner of the Kalahari, the desolate nature of the land and its unsuitability for intensive pastoral and agricultural use, and the form of colonization of this part of Africa were together factors in preserving an ancient culture. The exposure of that culture to the colonizers and their imperial ambitions was therefore relatively limited until more recent times.

Taking native space: colonization and dispossession of the Absarokee

Jeffrey Ostler has pointed out that

> the new history has rightly insisted that Indians were historical agents with unique perspectives requiring interpretation through careful attention to specific cultural contexts. In doing so ... the current generation of scholarship ... has deemphasized questions of power, ideology, and the state.[72]

The singular thing that all nomadic (and indeed all indigenous) societies had in common was their relationship with powerful imperial states and their agents, the harbingers of destructive change. In the case of the Absarokee, after their divergence from their Hidatsa origins around 400 BP, contact with the imperialists came late in their history. Hoxie pointed to four periods in the social histories of the Native Americans. The first was the period without any European contact. The second was a

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[70] Yellen in Lee & DeVore, p.50. Similar objections may be made in relation to the Tasmanians.
[71] Kusimba, 'What is a hunter-gatherer?', p. 337.
[72] Jeffrey Ostler, *The Plains Sioux and the U. S.: Colonialism from Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee,* Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2004, p. 4.

period of 'non-coercive interactions' with Europeans, mainly for purposes of trade. The third was a coercive period where the Europeans 'established military, economic and cultural control over the Indians.' The final period was and remains that of the survivors of the third: a period 'marked by ... cultural persistence.'[73] The third period – the age of colonization of western North America by the United States – was marked by substantial dispossession of all Native American tribes of the Plains, even where formal treaties had guaranteed them the right to permanent ownership of all or some of their ancestral lands. The colonial expansion of the United States into the Great Plains began with the 1804 expedition commanded by Captains Meriwether Lewis and William Clark (the "Corps of Discovery"), sent by President Thomas Jefferson to explore the Missouri River westerly to its source, and to locate the North-West Passage, a fabled water route connecting the east coast of the continent to the west through the new lands acquired by the Louisiana Purchase. The expedition passed through the villages of most of the sedentary Plains peoples – Lakota, Mandan and Hidatsa – but, on the outward journey, made no contact with the Absarokee, whose isolated country was south of the Missouri along the Yellowstone River. However, on the return journey the part of the expedition led by William Clark travelled along the Yellowstone and through the Bozeman Pass, Absarokee country. No record of contact between Clark and the Absarokee was recorded, Clark rejoining Lewis on the Missouri. While the upper Missouri country was well known to the French and American trappers and hunters who had frequented the area for decades[74], the significance of the Lewis and Clark expedition lay in the geographic and scientific work undertaken by it, and particularly in the maps produced by Clark, maps used by the white settlers as they soon followed the route of the explorers.

The first official contact between the Absarokee and their new colonial masters came in 1825, when the government, in the light of Indian attacks on trappers, convened a meeting of Plains' peoples for the purpose of making a treaty. This so-called 'Treaty of Friendship', entered into by a number of peoples including the Absarokee, recognized the sovereignty and supremacy of the United States over the Plains, but Ostler noted that this treaty was probably misunderstood by the Indians to

[73] Hoxie, 'Searching for Structure', p. 287.
[74] Frey noted that the Absarokee first encountered non-Indians in 1743, meeting the French explorers – the La Vérendrye brothers in northeastern Wyoming. Frey, *The World of the Crow Indian.*, p. 27.

be a 'friendly trade agreement.'[75] The United States' government, concerned at the confrontations between trappers, settlers and the Plains Indians, had, under Jefferson's administration, declared the region west of the Mississippi River as 'Indian Territory', and the boundary between 'civilized' lands and the Territory given the title the 'Permanent Indian Frontier'.[76] Although a few settlers travelled onto (and often through) the Plains during the decades of the 1830s and 1840s, the first major wave of white immigration took place with the discovery of gold in California in 1849, when prospectors pushed through the country of the Lakota, still only touching upon the lands of the Absarokee. In view of an increase in the number of clashes between Plains Peoples and the settlers, the government abandoned Jefferson's policy of exclusion and resolved to force the Peoples onto reservations, providing resources which it was considered would 'assimilate' them into white society.[77] As the result, and following a meeting of Plains Peoples held at Horse Creek, near Fort Laramie on the Platte River in September 1851, a treaty was entered into establishing reservations for each Plains Indian society. As Ostler has pointed out, given the decentralized nature of Sioux societies the treaty was again misunderstood and not completely accepted[78]. For the Absarokee, the treaty did, however, largely encompass the existing tribal boundaries and aroused little concern, even though its ramifications for the future (in the sense of the colonial ambitions of the United States) were not foreseen.[79]

Unlike most of the peoples of the Plains, the Absarokee never went to war against the Americans: to the contrary, they frequently acted as scouts for the United States Army in the actions against the Plains peoples, particularly the Lakota. The actions of Absarokee scouts at the Tongue River in 1876 in ambushing and killing five members of an Oglala Sioux delegation seeking a parley with Colonel Nelson Miles precipitated an extended warfare between the Oglalas, led by Chief Crazy Horse, and the Army. [80]

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[75] Ostler, *The Plains Sioux,* p. 32.
[76] p. 36, 37. *cf.* Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur's proclamation of 1828 for the 'retirement or expulsion' of Aborigines from the settled districts in Van Diemen's Land. *Copies of All Correspondence Between Lieutenant-Governor Arthur and His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies,* pp. 5-7.
[77] Ostler, *The Plains Sioux,* p. 36.
[78] pp. 37, 38.
[79] Frey, *The World of the Crow Indians,* p.28.
[80] Hoxie, 'Searching for structure', p. 288; Ostler, *The Plains Sioux,* p. 73.

The Absarokee prospered under the protection of the Fort Laramie Treaty in the decade of the 1850s, continuing their nomadic existence within their reservation of 38,531,147 acres, trading furs with the white trappers, and engaging in trading (and occasionally warfare) with their sedentary tribal neighbours. This period of relative peace ended in the 1860s, when gold mania seized the American public, and gold seekers intruded into Indian reservations on the Plains. In addition, land boosters promoted the worth of the Indian lands to homesteaders seeking small farms.[81] By 1860, the pressures for land for white settlement had begun to intensify, and a second Fort Laramie Treaty in 1868 reduced the Absarokee Reservation to eight million acres in return for 'promised indemnities associated with [Absarokee] health, education and welfare.' The railway arrived along the northern boundary of the reservation in 1880, bringing more pressure for land for settlers. Further land was ceded in 1882 in return for a promise to build houses and provide livestock. Land sales, carried out under the supervision and encouragement of the Indian agents, took place in 1890 and 1904. By 1905, the land within the reservation boundaries 'had been reduced to approximately 2,282,000 acres', much as exists today.[82] The Absarokee had therefore been pressured into ceding over ninety percent of their traditional country in the space of eighty years, in return for promises not always kept. As Jonathan Lear noted, under the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851 the government had promised $50,000 worth of supplies per year. The amount was paid only once.[83]

The intention of the government in moving the Plains Peoples onto reservations was to 'civilize' them – to inculcate the European ideologies of property ownership and individuality, the antitheses of Absarokee culture. For example, the *Allotment Act* of 1887 encouraged Plains Peoples to select landholdings in individual ownership, intending to make ranchers and farmers of them. The Act was applied to the Absarokee Reservation in 1905. Land not selected by the People was opened up to white settlers by way of leases and grazing permits, resulting in a practical if not legal

[81] Frey, p. 28; Ostler, p. 58.
[82] Frey, *The Plains Soiux,* p. 30; Hoxie, 'Searching for Structure', p. 294.
[83] Lear, *Radical Hope,* p. 26.

diminution in the Reservation.[84] Many other aspects of Absarokee life were affected by the curtailing of their nomadic culture. Children were forced to attend government boarding schools, separated from family and band, and punished for speaking their native language. The Indian Office rules and regulations of 1884 for the Reservation outlawed the Sun-dance, polygyny, sale of horses to Indians, consumption of alcohol, and most offensively, the role of 'medicine –man'. Infractions of these rules were punished by the withholding of rations.[85] The vital parts of the warrior culture of the Absarokee – the raiding of neighbouring peoples for horses, and the prestige gained from acts of bravery in tribal warfare – were no longer possible. The loss of prestige among the men of the bands meant that 'positions of tribal leadership became confused' and traditional identities questioned.[86] The effect of this almost total loss of culture was eloquently expressed by a famous leader, Chief Plenty Coups, considered 'the last great chief of the Crow nation'. When speaking of the Absarokee past to a white historian in the 1880s, the chief said 'when the buffalo went away the hearts of my people fell to the ground, and they could not lift them up again. After this nothing happened.'[87]

The fourth period of the social history of the Absarokee – Hoxie's period of 'survival and cultural persistence' – was the result of 'the relative swiftness of the domination process', a common denominator in the colonial era.[88] The Absarokee survived reservation life. The loss of population through sicknesses, particularly among the young, resulted in a skewing of the population profile where 'the birth cohort [adults between the ages of 20 and 29] seems to have been most decimated'.[89] However, Hoxie pointed out that, while agents and missionaries condemned their immorality, Crows persisted in their traditional practices [of polygyny and sexual experimentation] and formed the foundation of a new reservation community.'[90] By

[84] pp. 31, 32; Frederick Hoxie, *Parading Through History: the Making of the Crow Nation in America 1805-1933*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995, pp. 242, 270, 281, 283, 284, 292, 304. Leases and permits were granted to a handful of white graziers, and were held for decades.
[85] Lear, *Radical Hope,* p. 32. The provision of rations, particularly meat, was vital, not the least because the bison had been hunted to extinction by white men.
[86] Lear, *Radical Hope,* p. 33.
[87] p. 2, quoting the record of Frank Linderman.
[88] Hoxie, 'Searching for structure', p. 287; Hoxie, *Parading Through History*, Ch. 11.
[89] p. 290.
[90] p. 306.

1985, Frey noted that the number enrolled as members of the 'Crow tribe' was 7, 340, 'approximately 4,500 of whom lived on the reservation.'[91]

Hoxie examined the role of missionaries amongst the Absarokee in detail, describing the mission school established on the Crow reservation by Jesuit missionaries in 1887.The St Xavier Mission had one hundred and fifty pupils, and the priest in charge, Father Pierpalo Prando, had studied and mastered the Absarokee language as the result of his extended stays among the People from 1883. Previously, Jesuit missionaries were active to the east among the Sioux, the noted Jesuit Father Pierre-Jean De Smet – 'the Black Robe' – preaching and baptising along the Missouri River in the 1870's. De Smet may have had contact with the Absarokee at this time. Not to be outdone, a Protestant mission founded by Unitarians was established in the reservation in 1886, but closed in 1897. A second Protestant mission, established by the American Missionary Society, maintained a school at Crow Agency from 1895, and children were sent to it by force.[92] Ostler noted there were 'far more prospectors, railroad surveyors, and soldiers ... than evangelists.'[93] In any event, Christian religion held little appeal for the Indians. The Society of Friends, who were very active missionaries in British North America in the early nineteenth century, believed that the only successful means of 'civilizing the Indians was through the medium of religion, noting that the 'power of the Gospel', had reclaimed the Mississauga and Chippewa of Quebec, who, upon being converted 'perceived the evils attendant upon their former ignorant wandering state, [and] began to work ... they perceived the advantages of cultivating the soil.' The Gospel in this case had been administered by the Wesleyan Mission.[94] Whether or not this claim was wishful thinking is a moot point: however the success of the Wesleyans and Quakers apparently did not extend to the peoples of the mid-west.

The remarkable feature of Absarokee society in the face of the severe challenges from the avaricious white settlers, the paternalistic efforts of reservation administration by the government, and the pressures of forced acculturation and the

[91] Frey, *The World of the Crow Indians,* p. 30.
[92] Hoxie, *Parading Through History,* pp. 200-205.
[93] Ostler, *The Plains Sioux,* pp. 56, 57.
[94] *Information Respecting the Aborigines in the British Colonies. Circulated by the Direction of the Meeting for Sufferings*, London: Dartyon & Harvey, 1838, p. 35.

proscription of culture, was its sheer persistence. The Absarokee effectively resisted assimilation into American society by the attempts at making farmers of them on individual land holdings. As Hoxie demonstrated, the Absarokee existed not from the proceeds of individual labour, but from the collective leasing of their land to white ranchers. The proscription of their nomadic culture, often enforced by confinement or imprisonment, was evaded by the maintenance of extended 'visits' to neighbouring bands, or even to adjoining peoples, sometimes on the pretext of visiting relatives, or attending social events such as agricultural fairs.[95] The banning of the practice of their religion and the tobacco societies resulted not only in the active resistance to Western religions, but perversely, saw the importation of Native American religions from other regions, such as the early Ghost Dance religion of the Paiute prophet Wovoka in 1889, which provoked a series of wars on the Plains; and the later adoption of the peyote cult by the Absarokee from around 1910. Attempts at proscription of this latter religion failed completely, and the Absarokee embraced it with enthusiasm, perhaps given its similarity to the function of tobacco in their culture.[96]

Most importantly, the elders and wise men of the Absarokee, having avoided military conflict with the United States by astute negotiations, continued diplomatic efforts to ensure that their society would not only continue to survive, but would flourish, even within the parameters dictated by the American government. The elder Chief Plenty Coups, as noted above, was a powerful negotiator who resisted the cession of Absarokee lands and the legal proscription of cultural practices. The epitome of successful resistance came in 1934, when the political activist Robert Yellowtail, an educated member of the Lodge Grass band, persuaded the Roosevelt administration to appoint him superintendent of the Crow reservation and agency, effectively putting political control in the hands of the Absarokee themselves. The political successes of Yellowtail's administration, while disputed, are exemplified in the rejection by the Absarokee through democratic vote of the *Indian Reorganization Act* of 1834, a bill which would have, among other measures, vested the control of all Native American affairs in an overarching tribal council, and thus would have

[95] Hoxie, *Parading Through History,* p. 300.
[96] Hoxie, *Parading Through History,* pp. 219-221, 223-225.

removed the rights of the Absarokee to self-determination within their own country.[97] The Absarokee society survives to the present on its lands, a self-governing entity within the structure and laws of the United States. It is not the nomadic hunter-gathering society of prehistory: adaptation and acculturation – forced or by incorporation – have resulted in adoption of many of the accoutrements of modern Western societies. However, as Hoxie has noted,

> fuelled by social, cultural and religious practices that had managed to adapt to a new setting, led by politicians who defended their right to remain independent, Yellowtail and his community defined themselves as people with a country and a distinctive way of life. Their survival and re-emergence was not a product of their racial heritage or material setting, but of history: the interactions of traditions, institutions and personalities through time.[98]

The Absarokee society had the will and ability to persist, change and adapt. Hoxie has also pointed out that the Absarokee reject the notion that they now represent a 'modern version of a stone-age culture'; rather, that 'their reservation is a modern nation' in itself, and that,

> governed by a general assembly, regulated by a tribal council, educated by their elders and represented effectively by lobbyists and attorneys, the Crow community ... maintains 'government to government' relationships with the state of Montana and the United States of America.[99]

A post-colonial dispossession: the demise of !Kung society

The Barsawa experience was analogous to that of the Absarokee. The Dobe area, straddling a national boundary, was the subject of two regimes of colonial expansion in the nineteenth century. Prior to the arrival of the imperialists, the Kalahari had been the subject territory of various chiefdoms until the rise of the Tswana kingdom in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. The primary industry of the new state was pastoralism, together with some agriculture. The kingdom was subjected to numerous raids from eastern and southern coastal states seeking ivory, cattle and slaves; however the Basarwa of the upper Kalahari probably remained undisturbed during these centuries (with the probable exception of raids by slavers), continuing in their prehistorical occupations of hunters and gatherers. The Dutch colonization of the Cape of Good Hope and the subsequent movement of the Boer trekkers to the north had little effect on the Basarwa. Similarly, the activities of missionaries had little influence. Missionary activities began as early as 1814, when

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[97] pp. 337-341. Yellowtail was a proponent of the bill, but judiciously, reading the mood of his People, left his campaign in support to a very late time, ensuring its defeat.
[98] p. 342.
[99] Hoxie, *Parading Through History*, p. 4.

the London Missionary Society established the South West African Mission, followed by the Wesleyan Methodist Church in 1825 (whose missionary, the Reverend William Threfall, was murdered by 'Bushmen', probably Kutse people of the southern Kalahari). The Rhenish Mission took over missionary activities in Namibia from the London Missionary Society in 1840. Dr. David Livingstone, the missionary and explorer, baptised the Tswana king in 1848.[100] Livingstone, the most celebrated missionary of the London Society, crossed the Kalahari three times between 1849 and 1851, reaching Lake Ngami, on the edge of the country of the Basarwa, but did not appear to have spent time among them. Livingstone's first post in Bechuanaland, at Kuruman in the south, had a nominal congregation of 350 in 1841, but only forty communicants. He advised the Society that, rather than gain converts, he would probably lose them.[101] However, none of these activities seems to have touched upon the !Kung in particular.

When the Cape Colony was finally ceded by the Dutch to Great Britain in 1814, British settlers also headed into the northern territory, and, after the discoveries of gold and diamonds in 1867 and 1871, the British declared the Tswana kingdom, now called Bechuanaland, a protectorate. Apart from occupying Walvis Bay on the coast of South West Africa, the British took no interest in that adjoining territory, '[disclaiming] any responsibility ... outside of the Walvis Bay borders and to the north of the Orange River.' The requests for British protection had come from the Rhenish Mission; no doubt the British considered responsibility for their safety lay elsewhere.[102] Finally, with the agreement of Great Britain, and as part of its own imperial ambitions during the "Scramble for Africa", Germany declared the territory of South West Africa a protectorate in 1884, and entered into an agreement with Great Britain on 'spheres of influence'. From that time, the !Kung, together with all the Basarwa bands, without their knowledge or consent, became respectively subjects of the Imperial Majesties of Great Britain and Germany, depending on which side of the border their camps were situated. While the herding tribes in the south of the new protectorates engaged in disputes and wars with their new masters, there is no record of any attempts to alter or influence the way of life of the !Kung. Explorers, traders,

[100] The foregoing and following brief history is taken from J. H. Wellington, *South West Africa and its Human Issues*, London: Oxford University Press, 1967, pp.158-200.
[101] T. Jeal, *Livingstone*, Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985, pp. 39, 80.
[102] Jeal, *Livingstone,* p.167.

adventurers and farmers had passed within close proximity to the Dobe area, but none had made substantial contact with the !Kung up to the turn of the twentieth century, the maps of the area indicating a blank space.[103] The People were therefore able to roam their country free from any interference, apart from their interaction with their Bantu-speaking farming neighbours.

The tide changed during the twentieth century. Upon the creation of the Union of South Africa as a self-governing dominion in 1910, Great Britain maintained the protectorate of Bechuanaland, but was prepared to hand it over to the new state at some future time. The League of Nations' (and subsequently, the United Nations') mandate for the government of Namibia was transferred to the Union of South Africa. Apart from the creation of exclusive reserves for the Basarwa (and particularly the !Kung)[104], the government of the Union and the administrators of Namibia left the !Kung of the Dobe area in peace. However, from 1960 onwards, Richard Lee pointed to two phases of government policies affecting the Basarwa: first, the provision of welfare and encouragement of the missionary efforts of the Dutch Reformed Church; and secondly, the militarization of the People for use in action against the South West African People's Organization, creating ethnic battalions to fight the SWAPO movement in adjoining Angola.[105] These forms of forced acculturation had an obvious and lasting effect on the !Kung economy and society. On the other side of the border, Botswana gained independence in 1966, the British not being prepared to transfer responsibility to South Africa given the nature of the governing regime and its policies of apartheid. Under the new Republic of Botswana, the Basarwa were again largely left to their own devices until the 1990's, when the Botswana government decided to remove the peoples, including the !Kung, from the Kgalagadi Central Game Reserve, their traditional lands. The reasons given for the removal and relocation outside the Central Kgalagadi Game Reserve (which includes the Dobe area of the !Kung) were stated to be the cost of maintaining basic and essential services such as water, food rations, health care and access to education. Consultations between the Basarwa and the Botswana government took place over a

[103] Lee & Guenther, 'Problems in Kalahari Historical Etnography', pp. 224, 225.
[104] Wellington, *South West Africa,* p. 137; Richard Lee, 'The Gods Must Be Crazy, But the State Has a Plan: Government Policies Towards the San in Namibia', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, vol. 20, no. 1 (1986), p. 92, noting the creation of 'Bushmanland' in 1960.
[105] Lee,'The Gods Must Be Crazy', pp. 92, 93.

number of years, commencing in 1997. In 2001, the government gave notice of its intention to curtail all services within the reserve and offered compensation for those Basarwa who chose to relocate to new townships. Humanitarian groups protested vigorously at what was seen to be a forced relocation from the traditional lands, and the case was taken up by Ditshwanelo – the Botswana Centre for Human Rights – which took the case first to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, then to the United Nations' Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD). Ditshwanelo also supported a case brought before the Botswana High Court, seeking declarations of unconstitutionality in respect of the denial of the provision of essential services, and for the government's refusal to issue special game permits to the Basarwa to enable them to carry out traditional hunting and gathering practices.[106] In March 2006, the UNCERD called upon the government of Botswana to

> negotiate with 'the residents of the [Central Kalahari Game] Reserve, including those who have been relocated', using a 'rights-based approach' to recognise land rights.[107]

Further, the Committee specifically recommended that the Botswana government should:

> (a) pay particular attention to the close cultural ties that bind the San/Basarwa to their ancestral land; (b) protect the economic activities of the San/Barsawa that are an essential element of their culture, such as hunting and gathering practices, whether conducted by traditional or modern means; (c) study all possible alternatives to relocation; and, (d) seek the prior free and informed consent of the persons and groups concerned.[108]

Neil Parsons claimed that the existence of diamonds within the Game Reserve prompted the Botswana government to regard the area as 'inalienable national property contributing to the central state income', and the claims of the Basarwa had 'provoked extreme intolerance in ruling circles.' Mining for diamonds had taken place at Gope, within the reserve; however the claim that this was the grounds for relocation has been specifically denied by the government. In the High Court case considered below, the issue of mining was not raised by the Barsawa applicants, but the court

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[106] Details of the relocation and of the actions taken in response, from *Sesana and Ors v Attorney General (52/2002) [2006] BWHC 1,* Botswana High Court, Lobatse, 1 December 2006.
[107] Neil Parsons, 'Unravelling History and Cultural Heritage in Botswana', *Journal of South African Studies,* vol. 32, no. 4, p.677.
[108] *Report of the 68th Session of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination,* 20 February-10 March 2006, 'Botswana', http://www.universal humanrightsindex.org/documents/824/871/document/en/pdf/text.pdf, accessed 7 November 2007.

noted that the first applicant 'was running articles in the press during the trial to the effect that the mining of diamonds in the CKGR was one of the reasons why the government was relocating the residents'.[109] While Ditshwanelo and the First People of the Kalahari, representing the Basarwa, pressed for land rights, the Christian-based Kuru Development Trust in the Western Kalahari pressed for recognition of more wide-ranging human rights for the dispersed peoples of the desert, including the !Kung.[110] The resistance had little effect, and the relocation of the peoples of the Kalahari went ahead, although the government allowed a small number of Basarwa to remain in the reserve and a few !Kung returned to their homeland *sans* essential services.

On 13 December 2006, the Botswana High Court delivered a judgment on the Basarwa case. The applicants sought declarations that the termination of essential services was unlawful and unconstitutional; that they were in lawful possession of their lands within the reserve, and were wrongly deprived of such possession by the government forcibly or wrongly without their consent; that the government's refusal to issue special game permits to the Barsawa was unlawful and unconstitutional; and that the government's refusal to allow the Barsawa to enter the reserve without a special game permit was unlawful and unconstitutional. The Court ordered that:

1. The termination in 2002 by the Government of the provision of basic and essential services to the Applicants in the CKGR was neither unlawful nor unconstitutional.
2. The Government is not obliged to restore the provision of such services to the applicants in the CKGR.
3. Prior to Jan 2002, the Applicants were in possession of the land, which they lawfully occupied in their settlements in the CKGR.
4. The Applicants were deprived of such possession by the Government forcibly or wrongly and without their consent.
5. The Government refusal to issue special game licences to the Applicants is unlawful.
6. The Government refusal to issue special game licences to the Applicants is unconstitutional.
7. The Government refusal to allow the Applicants to enter the CKGR unless they are issued with permits is unlawful and unconstitutional.

The first applicant, as mentioned above, not only conducted a campaign through the press, but both he and his legal representation refused to attend the court, or to give evidence – factors which received the censure of the judges. As a result, each party was ordered to pay their own costs. Justice Dibotelo, in concluding that the result of the litigation would not end the dispute, expressed the hope that the parties would

[109] *Sesana & Ors v Attorney General,* para. 9.
[110] pp. 678, 679.

come together to resolve their differences.[111] With the conclusion of this case, the !Kung People of Dobe area on both sides of the Namibia-Botswana border had become the victims of colonialism, one through a legal process, the other through a form of forced acculturation.

The wages of imperialism: indigenous peoples and colonial dispossession

The brief histories above of these two nomadic peoples were not intended to be comprehensive, or to draw similarities between hunting and gathering nomads.[112] The intention was to demonstrate the different effects of cultural adaptation, cultural incorporation, and forced acculturation as the result of colonial dispossession, and the manner in which the respective nomadic peoples coped with change. Dispossessed, forcibly acculturated and persecuted, the !Kung and the Absarokee joined the long line of indigenous peoples who have suffered under imperial ambition. Their colonial experiences ranged from the relatively recent dispossession of the !Kung, who were essentially left to their own resources and way of life until valuable minerals were discovered in their lands; and the Absarokee, who in their wisdom attempted to cooperate with their colonial masters, believing they would be able to sustain their society, and were subjected to a policy of assimilation; but, by learning the lessons of politicking from their putative masters, managed the retention of a common culture. The colonial experience of the Van Diemen's Land Aborigines was at the other end of the scale – confrontational and violent, with tragic consequences.

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[111] *Sesana & ors v Attorney General,* paras. 54, 55.

[112] The inherent dangers in drawing similarities or commonalities between hunter-gatherer peoples was emphasised by Susan Kent, 'The Current Forager Controversy', above, pointing out the diversities among peoples. The dangers of assuming that existing hunter-gatherer societies are 'unique example[s] of an evolutionary stage in human development' is emphasised by Carmel Schrire, when she noted that, should the 'evolutionary stage' argument be abandoned, hunter-gatherers 'would emerge as ... people whose roots, history, and destiny are bound up with those [who cohabitate with them]. C. Schrire, 'An Enquiry into the Evolutionary Status and Apparent Identity of San Hunter-Gatherers', *Human Ecology*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1980, p. 28.

Appendix 2: the affray at Risdon Cove, 3 May 1804. A historiography

An account by James Backhouse Walker, November 1888.[1]

Walker's account, the 'painstaking analysis' referred to by Marie Fels, follows:

> With that fatality which always kept Bowen out of the way when he was wanted, an important and disastrous event occurred at Risdon in his absence. This was the first affray of the English with the natives. It was on the 3rd May, 1804, that this first of the long series of fatal encounters between the two races took place. Up to this time it does not appear that any natives had been seen in the neighbourhood of Risdon. Knopwood relates that there had been some friendly intercourse with the tribe on the other side of the river, and that some of them had come to Collins' camp. We also learn from him that he and Bowen had seen many natives in the neighbourhood of Frederick Henry Bay. The blacks had always shown themselves shy and suspicious, but relations had hitherto been quite friendly. The unhappy event of the 3rd May sowed the seeds of a hostility on the part of the blacks, which, exasperated from time to time by mutual injuries, filled the colony with deeds of outrage and horror, with savage murders of innocent settlers, and almost equally savage retaliation, until the native race was nearly exterminated, and the miserable remnant removed to *Flinders' Island*, to perish of slow decay. Of the origin of the affray the accounts are very contradictory. Two of these are contemporary; one recorded by Mr. Knopwood in his diary, the other in a letter by Lieut. Moore, the officer in charge of Risdon. The Chaplain says, under date Thursday, 3rd May:—"At 2 P.M. we heard the report of cannon once from Risdon. The Lieut.-Governor sent a message to know the cause. At half-past 7, Lieut. Moore arrived at the camp to Lieut.-Governor Collins, and I received the following note from Risdon:—
>
> DEAR SIR,
>
> I beg to refer you to Mr. Moore for the particulars of an attack the natives made on the camp to-day, and I have every reason to think it was premeditated, as their number far exceeded any that we ever heard of. As you express a wish to be acquainted with some of the natives, if you will dine with me to-morrow, you will oblige me by christening a fine native boy who I have. Unfortunately, poor boy, his father and mother were both killed; he is about 2 years old. I have, likewise, the body of a man that was killed. If Mr. Bowen wishes to see him

[1] J. B. Walker, *Early Tasmania: Papers read before the Royal Society of Tasmania during the years 1888 to 1899*, 5th impression, Hobart: M.C.Reed, Government Printer, 1989, pp. 50-55.

dissected, I will be happy to see him with you to-morrow. I would have wrote to him, but Mr. Moore waits.

Your friend,

J. MOUNTGARRET.

Hobart, six o'clock.

The number of natives, I think, was not less than 5 or 6 hundred. J.M."

Knopwood continues:

"At 8, Lieut. Moore came to my marquee, and stayed some time; he informed me of the natives being very numerous, and that they had wounded one of the settlers, Burke, and was going to burn his house down, and ill-treated his wife, &c., &c."

Lieut.-Moore's letter—a copy of which is preserved in the Record Office—is dated Risdon Cove, 7th May, 1804, and is addressed to Governor Collins. He says—

SIR,

Agreeable to your desire, I have the honour of acquainting you with the circumstances that led to the attack on the natives, which you will perceive was the consequence of their own hostile appearance.

It would appear from the numbers of them, and the spears, &c., with which they were armed, that their design was to attack us. However, it was not until they had thoroughly convinced us of their intentions, by using violence to a settler's wife, and my own servant—who was returning into camp with some kangaroos, one of which they took from him—that they were fired upon. On their coming into camp and surrounding it, I went towards them with five soldiers. Their appearance and numbers I thought very far from friendly. During this time I was informed that a party of them was beating Birt, the settler, at his farm. I then despatched two soldiers to his assistance, with orders not to fire if they could avoid it. However, they found it necessary; and one was killed on the spot, and another found dead in the valley.

But at this time a great party was in the camp; and on a proposal from Mr. Mountgarret to fire one of the carronades to intimidate them, they departed.

Mr. Mountgarret, with some soldiers and prisoners, followed them some distance up the valley, and have reason to suppose more was wounded, as one was seen to be taken away bleeding. During the time they were in camp, a number of old men were perceived at the foot of the hill, near the valley, employed in preparing spears.

I have now, Sir, as near as I can recollect, given you the leading particulars, and hope there has nothing been done but what you approve of.

I have the honour to be, &c.,

WILLIAM MOORE,

Lieut. N.S.W. Corps.

It will be noticed that in this letter Lieut. Moore, who had every reason to represent the conduct of the natives in the worst light, can shown no direct act of hostility. He assumed that they were hostile, from their numbers; and, for the beating of Birt, and the proposed burning of his hut, he has no evidence to offer but a report brought to him in the midst of the panic which the appearance of the blacks had caused among his people. That the doctor's proposal to fire the carronade should have induced savages, who did not understand the language, and had never seen fire-arms, to withdraw, is too great a stretch on one's credulity. We know, from Knopwood, that the gun was fired; but, whether it was loaded with blank cartridge or with grape, we have no means of deciding.

The only other eye-witness of the affair whose account we have directly contradicts Lieut. Moore; and his story looks probable, like the story of a man who had kept his head amidst the general panic.[64] This witness is one Edward White, who was examined before Governor Arthur's Aborigines' Committee in 1830. In considering his evidence, it should be remembered that, at the time he gave it, the exasperation of the whole colony against the blacks, on account of their brutal outrages, was at fever heat, and the witness had every inducement to represent their conduct in this affair in an unfavourable light. White came to the colony with Bowen, and was an assigned servant to the settler Clark. He was the first man who saw the approach of the natives. He was hoeing new ground on the creek near Clark's house, which was about half a mile up the valley behind the camp. As he was hoeing, he saw 300 natives, men, women, and children, coming down the valley in a circular, or, rather, a semi-circular, form, with a flock of kangarro between them. They had no spears, but were armed with waddies only, and were driving the kangaroo into the bottom. On catching sight of him, they paused, astonished, and, to use his expression, " looked at him with all their eyes." White had very probably been accustomed to the Port Jackson natives; at any rate, he says that he felt no alarm at the approach of the blacks, but he thought it advisable to go down the creek and inform some soldiers. He then went back to his work. On his return the natives were near Clark's house. They did not molest him or threaten him in any way. Birt's house was on the other side of the creek, some hundreds of yards off, and White was very positive that, so far from attacking Birt or his house, they never even crossed over to that side of the creek, and " were not within half a quarter of a mile " of the hut. He knew nothing of their going into the camp itself; but they did not attack the soldiers, and, he believed, would not have molested them. When the firing commenced there were a great many of the natives slaughtered and wounded, how many he did not know.

The Rev. Mr. Knopwood gave evidence before the same committee.[65] He stated that he had heard different

(64) Military operations against the aborigines of V.D.L., House of Commons Paper, 23rd September, 1831, p. 53.
(65) H. of Com. Paper, 23rd Sept., 1831, p. 52.

opinions as to the origin of the attack; that it was said the natives wanted to encamp on the site of Birt's hut, half a mile from the camp, and had ill-used his wife, but that the hut was not burnt or plundered. They did not attack the camp, but our people went from the camp to attack the natives, who remained at Birt's hut. He thought only five or six natives were killed. The general opinion was that the blacks had gone to Risdon to hold a corroboree.

These accounts throw great doubt on the accuracy of Lieut. Moore's version of the affair. It is significant that Knopwood, who had every opportunity of learning the truth at the time, should state so positively that the natives never left the neighbourhood of Birt's hut, but that the soldiers went out to attack them.

It seems clear that the natives had no hostile intention in their visit, and this was the conclusion of Governor Arthur's committee. Everything goes to show that they were a party coming from the east, probably the Oyster Bay tribe, engaged on a hunting expedition, and that they were more astonished than the English on coming into contact with them. The fact of their having their women and children with them is perfectly conclusive proof that no attack was contemplated. We can easily understand how terrifying to the Risdon people must have been this sudden inroad of a horde of excited savages, yelling and gesticulating. Utterly ignorant of their customs, unable to understand them, or to make themselves understood, the panic of the English, convinced that the natives had collected in force to destroy them, was natural enough. Doubtless the soldier shared in the general scare, and, moreover, were probably quite inclined to take pot shots at the black savages. But Lieut. Moore ought not to have lost his head. He, at least, should have grasped the situation, and restrained his men. A little more presence of mind on his part, the exercise of a little tact and forbearance, and a collision would have been avoided, the natives would have been conciliated, and the history of the black race in Tasmania might have been different. That the aborigines of Tasmania would, in any case, have melted away before the white man, as the aborigines of the other colonies are melting away, is certain; but if it had not been for Lieut. Moore's error at Risdon, a war of extermination, with all its attendant horrors, might have been averted.

There is little to add respecting this occurrence, except that, according to White,[66] some of the bones of the slaughtered natives were sent in two casks to Port Jackson by Dr. Mountgarret, and that the chaplain, ever anxious to extend the bounds of his church, records that he went to Risdon a week later and " xtiand a young native boy whose name was Robert Hobert May "[67]—the good chaplain having thus the honour of bestowing his name on this first innocent aboriginal Christian. Collins tells Governor King that the baptism had taken place without his knowledge or consent, and when he found that Dr. Mountgarret intented to take this two-year-old native to Sydney, he had the boy brought to the camp, and directed that he should be returned to his own people, for fear they should think he had been killed and eaten by the English.[68] " For," he remarks, " we have every reason to believe them to be cannibals, and they may entertain the same opinion of us."[69] The incident made Collins very apprehensive of further attacks; and, indeed, a few days after this affray the crew of the cutter, while collecting oyster shells on the river bank opposite Hobart, was attacked by a numerous party of natives, and beaten off with stones and clubs.

([66]) H. of Com. Paper, 23rd Sept., 1881, p. 53. ([67]) Knopwood, 11th May. ([68]) Collins to King, 15th May, 1804. ([69]) There is no foundation for this opinion. ([70]) Collins to King, 15th May, 1804. ([71]) Collins to Hobart, 31st July, 1804.

Early hearsay accounts

Walker's account of the events contained all the first-hand evidence of the affray, including that of Edward White, given to the Aborigines Committee in March 1830. The elaboration of the events appeared to have commenced with William Wentworth's *Description of the Colony of New South Wales and its Independent Settlements in Van Diemen's Land*, published in 1819, and repeated in George Evans' *A Geographical, Historical, and Topographical Description of Van Diemen's Land*, published in 1822. Apparently, Wentworth only visited Van Diemen's Land briefly *en route* to England in April 1816. He may have heard stories of the affray from the first settlers still alive at the time. Evans, on the other hand, first worked on surveys in the colony in 1812, and may also have heard of the affray, perhaps even from persons who were present at Risdon. Evans' (and therefore Wentworth's) record of the event follows:

hatred and hostility towards the colonists. This deep-rooted enmity, however, does not arise so much from the ferocious nature of these savages, as from the inconsiderate and unpardonable conduct of our countrymen shortly after the foundation of the settlement on the river Derwent. At first the natives evinced the most friendly disposition towards the new comers, and would probably have been actuated by the same amicable feeling to this

day, had not the military officer intrusted with the command, directed a discharge of grape and canister shot to be made among a large body of them, who were approaching, as he imagined, with hostile designs; but, as has since been believed, with much greater probability, merely from motives of

curiosity and friendship.* The havoc occasioned among them by this murderous discharge was dreadful; and since that time all communication with them has ceased, and the spirit of animosity and revenge which this unmerited and atrocious act of barbarity engendered, has been fostered and aggravated to the highest pitch by the incessant rencontres which have taken place between them and the settlers. The latter, whenever an occasion offers, destroy as many of them as possible, and they, in their turn, never neglect an opportunity of retaliating on their blood-thirsty neighbours. Fortunately, however, for the colonists, they have seldom or never been known to act on the offensive, unless when they have met with some of their persecutors singly. Two persons armed with muskets

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* This happened at the first formation of the colony, when, Lieutenant-Governor Bowen having left Risdon, on a tour through the island, to ascertain the spots most eligible for granting allotments of land to settlers, the command devolved on an officer of the New South-Wales corps. Toward noon of the following day, a considerable number of the natives were seen descending from the neighbouring hills: as they approached they were distinctly heard to sing, each man having in his hand a green bough, a well-known emblem of peace among savage tribes. Either their signals of amity were not well understood, or their numbers too great to be trusted: it is otherwise impossible to conceive that a British officer would have had recourse to so harsh and cruel a measure.

The embellishments included the 'discharge of grape and canister shot', and the carrying of "green boughs', no written contemporary record of either being extant. Perhaps the most elaborate embellishments were found in John Pascoe Fawkner's *Reminiscences of Early Hobart Town 1804-1810*, written in 1866.[2] Fawkner arrived in Hobart Town with the Collins' party on the ship *Ocean* in 1804, aged eleven. He was the son of John Fawkner senior, a convict. His account of the affray follows:

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[2] John Pascoe Fawkner, *Reminiscences of Early Hobart Town 1804-1810,* Malvern: The Banks Society, 2007.

> In the month of May a grievous uncalled for and murderous assault was committed upon the Aborigines at Risdon. The natives had always been very friendly with the Europeans up to this time, and they assembled to hold a carroboree, or merry-making, at Risdon. Unfortunately Lieutenant Bowen was easily led by those about him, and on this occasion the medical man, a Dr. Mountgarret, came suddenly upon Commandant Bowen and declared that the Aborigines would to a certainty murder every soul on the settlement if the commandant did not take the first change and shoot the *'black devils down'*, (the doctor's own words). The commandant's lady got frightened and begged he would take measures to protect her in the condition she was from these blacks.
>
> The two then consulted together and the Doctor persuaded the commandant to order two cannons they had to be loaded, first with powder, and then to be filled up with pieces of iron and broken bottles; the military to be armed and their muskets loaded with not a ball only, but slugs upon the balls. And these two worthies actually fired upon the unarmed Aborigines whilst engaged in dancing, and men, women and children were fired upon, and it was said that not less than fifty were shot down. Some few crawled away, only to die a lingering death in the woods. About thirty bodies were found and burnt or buried at the choice of those sent to clear the air of the effluvia.
>
> This unprovoked massacre caused the death of many of our people afterwards, for from that time it was war between the races and no quarter. The blacks

The embellishments, again unsupported by written evidence, took the form of the use of both of the carronades, one now loaded with 'pieces of iron and broken bottles', and muskets loaded with ball and 'slugs'. Casualties amounted to 'not less than fifty ... Some few crawled away, only to die a lingering death in the woods. About thirty bodies were found and burnt or buried at the choice of those sent to clear

the air of effluvia.' Given that the report of only one discharge was heard in Hobart Town, Fawkner's account is embellished at least in this respect.[3]

A comprehensive account of the affray is also found in James Bonwick's *The Last of the Tasmanians*.[4] Bonwick noted that 'The composition of history makes us acquainted with the difficulties of learning the truth of a story ... the first conflict of races of Tasmania is similarly involved in misty obscurity.' He quoted Knopwood, Edward White and Robert Evans (who also gave hearsay evidence of the affray to the Aborigines' Committee in 1830). He also quoted William Wentworth from 1823, repeating the accusation of the discharge of canister and grapeshot at the body of Aborigines, 'a murderous discharge'. An 'informant, a settler of 1804', told Bonwick that Lieutenant Moore, the officer in charge, 'saw double that morning from an over-dose of rations' rum' which 'led some to think that the whole was the effect of a half-drunken spree'. Bonwick further quoted an 'excellent storyteller, Captain Holman, the Blind Traveller' who 'heard the story' at Thomas Gregson's house, at the site of Risdon Cove. In Holman's account there is no mention of the use of the carronades, or any indication of the numbers of Aborigines killed by the 'volley' of musketry. Bonwick concluded that the story, such as he recorded, 'leaves the military without excuse for their barbarous onslaught upon the Natives at Risdon.'

An earlier account is found in John West's *The History of Tasmania*, again using in the main the written evidence of the 1804 reports and despatches and the evidence tendered to the Aborigines' Committee in 1830. West noted that 'the accounts of this affair differ greatly' and that it was 'conjectured that fifty [Aborigines] fell'. West did not mention the discharge of the carronade, but perhaps implied it in recording that a 'discharge of firearms threw [the Aborigines] into momentary panic. A second, of ball cartridge, brought down many; the rest fled in terror'. West concluded that the 'consequences of these events were lamentable ... the havoc of [the Aborigines] new enemy awakened irremediable distrust.'[5]

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[3] Fawkner, *Reminiscences*, pp. 23-25. Fawkner's embellishment of the manner in which the carronade was loaded has been repeated several times, most recently by John Currey, *David Collins: A Colonial Life*, Carlton: The Miegunyah Press, 2000, p. 220.

[4] James Bonwick, *The Last of the Tasmanians, or The Black war of Van Diemen's Land*, London: Sampson Low, Son, & Marston, 1870 (facs. ed. Libraries Board of South Australia, 1969), pp. 32-36.

[5] John West, *The History of Tasmania*, A.G.L.Shaw (ed). Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1971.

The story of the Risdon affray was repeated in differing forms in numerous works. For example, the branch-waving story was repeated by George Thomas Lloyd in his *Thirty-Three Years in Tasmania and Victoria*, published in 1862. Lloyd numbered the Aborigines at one hundred and fifty, and noted that 'the troops were ordered to arms and most unpardonably directed open fire upon the offending natives.'[6] Jorgen Jorgenson briefly referred to the affray in his *Narrative of the Habits, Manners, and Customs of the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land*, written about 1837 (the 'Braim manuscript). He virtually repeated the version recounted by Evans, including the carrying of 'green boughs' by the Aborigines, and added that they were 'distinctly heard to sing', signs of 'amity' towards the whites not understood. Jorgenson also claimed that a 'discharge of round grape and canister shot' took place, presumably from the carronade that was fired.[7] In 1876, James Erskine Calder, the doyen of the early chroniclers of the Tasmanian Aborigines, included an account of the Risdon affray in his work *Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits, &c., of the Native Tribes of Tasmania*. Calder had arrived in Van Diemen's Land in 1829, and was first employed as an assistant surveyor with the Land Survey Department. He was an avid r3esearcher into the history of white settlement of the colony, and his manuscripts contain extensive correspondence between himself and early settlers. Calder repeated the evidence of White as given to the Aborigines' Committee in 1830, and detailed the Committee's conclusions, as noted below. In particular, he noted that White 'who was the only [witness] actually present at the moment – declared, in opposition to all the rest, that the soldiers began the fight that took place, and *not* the blacks.' He claimed that the inclusion of women and children in the band of Aborigines was 'a certain proof that they had no hostile intentions against anyone at the time'. Calder concluded that 'in balancing the evidence, the blacks seem to have been the aggressors'.[8] In his seminal anthropological work of 1890, *The Aborigines of Tasmania*, Ling Roth quoted surveyor James Meehan in claiming that 'In the first affray with the blacks ... at Risdon ... the best evidence

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[6] G. T. Lloyd, *Thirty-Three Years in Tasmania and Victoria, being the actual experience of the Author, interspersed with historical jottings, narratives, and counsel to emigrants*, London: Houlston & Wright, 1862, pp.54, 55.

[7] N.J.B.Plomley (ed). *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land*, Hobart: Blubber Head Press, 1991, p. 123. Jorgenson wrongly claimed that the superintendent at Risdon, Lieutenant Bowen, was absent 'on a tour through the island, to ascertain the spots most eligible for granting allotments of land to the settlers'. Bowen was in fact in Sydney.

[8] J.E.Calder, *Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits, &c., of the Native Tribes of Tasmania*, 1875, facs.ed., Hobart: Fullers Bookshop, 1972, pp. 6, 7.

goes to show that very few were killed – perhaps five or six. Future hostilities do not appear to have been caused by this incident.' Meehan was not present in Hobart Town on 3 May 1804. He had returned to Sydney on the *Lady Nelson* on 6 March. His comments were therefore hearsay at best.[9]

The affray did not go unnoticed by European commentators. Captain Jules Dumont d'Urville, the leader of the French expedition to the South Seas in 1826-1829, noted the affray in his journal during his stay in Van Diemen's Land, reporting that

> The natives wished to be friendly to their visitors, but Lieutenant Jeffreys [sic], who was in command of the detachment in Bowen's absence, unfortunately mistook the nature of their intentions and received them with cannon and rifle fire, and several of these unfortunate savages were killed or wounded. From this moment the islanders conceived an inveterate hatred of the English and gave them continual proof of this any time they got the opportunity.[10]

During his tour of New Holland in 1833 and 1834, Baron Charles von Hügel, commenting on the Risdon affray, and generally on the treatment of the Aborigines by the settlers in Van Diemen's Land, claimed that

> Let it not be said that England or the upper classes are free of blame for what individuals from among the populace perpetrated here. Was it not the first officer in command, Lieutenant Moore, who set the precedent establishing what kind of law was in force here, when he shot down fifty people without cause? If the inhabitants of Van Diemen's Land had been like those of the west coast of New Holland, they would simply have looked for fifty whites. If these people had been filled with an innate lust for destruction, as the [Aborigines'] Committee believes, not a single isolated house could have remained standing.[11]

In the absence of a newspaper in the early days of the Derwent settlement, contemporary public commentary on the affray was nonexistent; however, the issue was canvassed again at the height of the Black War, particularly in the light of the findings and recommendations of the Aborigines' Committee in 1830. In a report of the public meeting held in Hobart Town on 22 September 1830 for the purpose of organising a 'town guard' during the forthcoming Line Campaign against the Aborigines, Anthony Fenn Kemp, in addressing the meeting,

> lamented that much of the hostility of the Blacks was in the first instance to be attributed to the aggression on the part of the Whites, and mentioned a circumstance of a brother officer of

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[9] H. Ling Roth, *The Aborigines of Tasmania*, 2nd ed., Halifax: King & Sons, 1899, p.2; Tony Dawson, *James Meehan: a most excellent surveyor*, Sydney: Crossing Press, 2004, p. 30.

[10] Jules S-C Dumont D'Urville, *An Account in Two Volumes of Two Voyages to the South Seas*, Vol. 1: *Astrolabe* 1826-1829, trans by Helen Rosenman, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1987. p. 184.

[11] Baron Charles von Hügel, *new Holland Journal, November 1833-October 1834,* trans. and ed. Dymphna Clark, Melbourne: Miegunyah Press, 1994, p. 145. Von Hügel was a trenchant critic of the colonial activities of the British Government.

> the 102nd regt. in the early periods of the colony who committed an outrage upon them by firing on a tribe which had assembled at the Cove point, where he was stationed.[12]

Kemp was not present at the affray. As late as 1872, the affray was still recalled in newspaper columns. In a letter condemning the violence of the settlers towards the Aborigines in the early years, a 'Correspondent' repeated verbatim Evans' description of the clash.[13]

The official record: the Aborigines' Committee report of 1830

On 19 March 1830, the Aborigines Committee reported at length to the Lieutenant-Governor on their inquiry 'into the origin of the hostility displayed by the Black Natives of this Island against the Settlers'. The Committee noted that it was 'undeniable that in many former instances cruelties have been perpetrated repugnant to humanity, and disgraceful to the British character, whilst few attempts can be traced on the part of the Colonists to conciliate the Natives, or make them sensible that peace and forbearance are the objects desired'. However, the Committee was 'not prepared to say that the description given by Lieutenant-Governor Sorell of the passive and inoffensive character of the Aborigines, unless when previously attacked, [was] entirely supported by the evidence before them'. The Committee concluded that

> The first act of decided hostility was committed at Risdon, on the eastern shore of the Derwent, at which place the settlement was under the command of Lieutenant Moore, of the 102nd Regiment. This occurrence took place the 3d of May 1804, and the Committee have some difficulty in deciding whether it is to be considered as originating in an aggression by the Natives, calling forth measures of self-defence, or in an attack upon them commenced by the settlers and military, under an impression that an attempt was about to be made upon the position, by the unusually augmented number of the Natives who had made their appearance in the neighbourhood. It appears unquestionable that a person named Burke, whose habitation was considerably advanced beyond the rest, was driven from it by the Natives, whose number was estimated at upwards of 500, and much violence was threatened by them towards this man and his wife and dwelling. But it is the opinion of some persons who were then in the Colony, that the displeasure of these people was excited only by finding this hut erected upon ground to which, as being favourably situated for water and hunting, they were in the habit of resorting, and on which they were preparing at this time to hold a general assembly; and that they had no more hostile intention than to remove this obstacle to their proceedings; while it is deposed by one, who was an eye witness, that they did not proceed even to this extent of aggression. Their having been accompanied by their women and children, whom, when engaged in expeditions of danger, they are known to be in the habit of leaving in a place of security, is a circumstance strongly in favour of the opinion, that they had in view no other than a peaceful purpose, and that they were not the first assailants. But whatever may have been the actual course of previous events, it is indisputable that a most lamentable encounter did at this time ensue, in which the numbers slain, of men, women and children, have been estimated as high as 50; although the Committee, from the experience they have had in the course of this enquiry of the facility with which numbers are magnified, as well as other statements contradictory of the above, are induced to hope that the estimate is greatly overrated.

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[12] *Hobart Town Courier*, 25 September1830.
[13] *The Mercury*, 27 April 1872.

> Whether or no the resentment occasioned by this encounter has been ever since maintained, and has continued to influence the Natives in their feelings towards the white population, it is impossible with perfect certainty to determine.[14]

The Committee's conclusion gave no weight to the hearsay evidence of an original settler, James Kelly, who repeated the claim of the use of grapeshot when the carronade was fired. The conclusion more reflected the reasoned and apparently unembellished testimony of Edward White, Reverend Robert Knopwood and William Stocker, and reached as it was at the distance of twenty-six years after the event, was the best that could be expected in the absence of other eyewitnesses. Particularly so, given the failure to seek testimony from the injured party; that is the *Mairremmener* People, many of whom not only spoke English, but who were of such an age as to have possibly been present at the affray – Tongelongter of the *Poredarereme* band from Oyster Bay being one example. As Robinson pointed out, the Committee knew nothing about the Aborigines, and apparently made no attempt to obtain the other side of the story; a general reflection in itself on the process of colonization under which indigenous peoples were ignored, or made invisible.[15]

Retelling the story: recent accounts of the affray.

The narratives of the Risdon Cove affray have been shaped by the context of the timing of retelling. These changing emphases are set out by Lyndall Ryan in her article 'Risdon Cove and the Massacre of 3 May 1804: Their Place in Tasmanian History'.[16] Ryan detailed a framework of settler narratives proposed by Ann Curthoys, under which four kinds were identified. The first were the early narratives which '"Defended colonisation itself, as ordained by God and necessary for the advance of humanity"'. The second, dating from the end of the nineteenth century, were those of the colonist 'as the original inhabitant of the land where the Indigenous people had either already died out or were destined to do so.' The third and fourth kinds of narratives intersected during the latter part of the twentieth century, where initially 'Indigenous people and their issues with the past resurfaced and reframed the

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[14] *Van Diemen's Land: Copies of all correspondence between Lieutenant-Governor Arthur and His Majesty's Secretary of State for the Colonies, on the subject of the military operations lately carried on against the Aboriginal inhabitants of Van Diemen's Land*, Hobart: Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1971, p.37.

[15] Plomley, *Friendly Mission*, p.100.

[16] L. Ryan, 'Risdon Cove and the Massacre of 3 May1804', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, Vol. 9, 2004, pp. 107-123.

narrative to acknowledge that the settler's battle with the land included the dispossession of the Aborigines'; quickly followed by reactive narratives of rejection of prior Aboriginal ownership, for 'fear of losing the land [the settlers] have won and of being displaced by people they had defeated a century before.'[17]

Ryan placed the contemporary reports of the Risdon Cove affray in the first category, and included Wentworth's and Evan's descriptions, and a further one by Charles Jeffreys published in 1820, together with the later descriptions by West, Bonwick, Calder and Fenton. In the case of the last four commentators, Ryan noted that they 'all agreed that the Aborigines were innocent victims of an attack led by an incompetent soldier, Lieutenant Moore, who was personally responsible', and the major difference between these commentaries and the first reports was that 'they claimed [the affray] caused the irretrievable breakdown in relations between the two groups and ended in the Black War.'[18] Ryan termed the second narrative phase 'scientific racism', and cited the celebrations held in 1904, on the centenary of the Risdon Cove settlement. The monument erected for the celebration did not mention the 'massacre'. The *Early History of Tasmania* by R.W. Giblin, written in 1939, was a late example of the second category. Giblin claimed 'it was inevitable that the native people should fade away before the more vigorous race.' Ryan also point to 'a barrage of research carried out by the international scientific community to argue that the Tasmanian Aborigines were the missing link between ape and man'[19]

The third phase, which Ryan termed the 'humanitarian' period, spanned the years 1948 to 1985. The works of Clive Turnbull, Brian Plomley, Lloyd Robson and Ryan herself emphasised the resistance of the Tasmanian Aborigines to colonization, from evidence found in new sources such as G. A. Robinson's journals. The period also saw extensive archaeological reports, including a particular examination of the Risdon Cove site by Angela McGowan, which indicated over 8,000 years of

[17] Ryan, 'Risdon Cove', pp. 208, 209.
[18] p. 116.
[19] p. 117, quoting R. W. Giblin, *The Early History of Tasmania,* Vol. II, Carlton: Melbourne University Press, 1939, p. 20.

Aboriginal occupation. As Ryan noted, with these works, 'Risdon Cove was once again a site of both Aboriginal and settler occupation'.[20]

In the final phase, Ryan claimed 'a struggle ensued between Aborigines and settlers about the ownership of the site and how its story should be presented'. At the Bicentenary celebrations in 1988, a re-enactment of the first settlers arriving at Risdon Cove was interrupted by a protest from one hundred Aborigines, whose spokesman, Michael Mansell, claimed that 'over two hundred Aborigines, men, women and children, had been slaughtered at Risdon Cove in the first months after white settlement.' In 1992, the 'young Indigenous scholar, Greg Lehman, published an Indigenous narrative of [the affray]', in which he claimed '"Close to a hundred were killed that day, whole families; the exact number will never be known.' Lehman repeated the story of the butchering of bodies for sending to Sydney. That protest, together with a continuing campaign by the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre, led to an agreement with the state government in November 1995, to hand over the ownership of the Risdon site to the Tasmanian Aboriginal Land Council. The return of the site led to a dispute between the Council and a group called the *Lia Pootah*, claiming descent from the *Moomairremener* People. In a work associated with the claim, the numbers of Aborigines killed on 3 May 1804 was contended to be eighty.[21] Ryan's 'final phase' also included narratives of contestation, first from Keith Windschuttle, whose work *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History: Volume One, Van Diemen's Land*, devoted a chapter to the affray. Windschuttle declared that, on the recorded evidence, it was 'a defensive action by the colonists in which three Aborigines were shot dead and at least one, though possibly more, wounded ... To fabricate a death toll of "close to a hundred", as descendants of the Tasmanian Aborigines have done, is to abandon any semblance of veracity in order to milk the event for maximum political gain..' In coming to that conclusion, he dismissed the evidence given by Edward White as appearing to derive 'more from the common gossip of 1830 than from direct observation'. Equally, he dismissed all other hearsay commentary and the

[20] C. Turnbull, *Black War. The Extermination of the Tasmanian Aborigines*, Melbourne: F.W.Cheshire, 1948; Plomley, *Friendly Mission*; L. Robson, *A History of Tasmania*, Vol. 1, Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1983; L. Ryan, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, St.Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1981; A. McGowan, *Archaeological Investigations at Risdon Cove Historic Site 1978-1980*, Hobart: National Parks and Wildlife Service, Occasional Paper No. 10, 1985.
[21] Ryan, 'Risdon Cove and the Massacre of 3 May 1804', pp. 118-120.

later embellishments of historians such as Bonwick.[22] Windschuttle's book and his previous essays on the subject of Aboriginal history in Tasmania created a veritable storm of protest and contestation, resulting in a number of debates, and finally a work containing essays in refutation of his claims.[23] Phillip Tardif contributed an essay entitled 'Risdon Cove', in which he supported the detail of the affray given by White in evidence in 1830, and claimed that Windschuttle erred 'by weighting the facts to suit his thesis'. In an essay entitled 'Fantasy Island', James Boyce made similar comments in relation to White's evidence on the affray.[24] Both Tardif and Boyce produced later histories which continued the debate on the Risdon Cove affray.[25] Other works which briefly describe the affray, but gave no estimate of numbers of Aborigines killed, included Robert Hughes (*The Fatal Shore* [1987]: 'Nobody counted how many of the unarmed blacks were slaughtered'); Henry Reynolds (Fate *of a Free People* [1995]: 'the detachment of soldiers [at Risdon Cove] fired their cannon – with what effect it is impossible to determine'); and John Connor (*The Australian Frontier Wars 1788-1838* [2002]: 'troops of the New South Wales Corps ... panicked at the sight of a Moomairremener hunting party and fired on them killing an unknown , but probably substantial number').[26]

The above historiography is not comprehensive: the affray is discussed, sometimes at length, in other works. Whatever the extent of the argument over the results of the affray, including the issues of numbers killed, disposal of bodies, and the lasting effect of the clash on the relations between settlers and Aborigines, in the absence of independent evidence of the events, or, at least, evidence from both sides of the affray, the principle point germane to its history is made by Reynolds, when he

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[22] K. Windschuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History: Volume One, Van Diemen's Land*, Sydney: Macleay Press, 2002, pp.11-26.
[23] Robert Manne (ed)., *Whitewash: On Keith Windschuttle's Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, Melbourne: Black Inc. Agenda, 2003.
[24] Pp. 40-42, 218-224.
[25] P. Tardif, *John Bowen's Hobart: The Beginnings of European Settlement in Tasmania*, Hobart: Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 2003; J. Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*, Melbourne: Black Inc., 2008.
[26] R. Hughes, *The Fatal Shore: A History of the Transportation of Convicts to Australia, 1787-1868*, London: The Harvill Press, 1987, p. 414. Hughes was in error – the Aborigines were armed with spears and waddies; H. Reynolds, *fate of a Free People*, Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1995, pp. 76-77; J. Connor, *The Australian Frontier Wars 1788-1838*, Sydney: University of New South Wales Press, 2002, p. 34.

noted that 'The very real difficulties of determining how many blacks were killed by Europeans can be illustrated by considering the so-called Risdon massacre'.[27]

[27] Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People*, p. 76.

Appendix 3: names and details of the *Mairremmener* People exiled to Wybalenna Settlement, Flinders Island.

The following names are those individuals from *Mairremmener* bands who appear from the records to have been exiled to Flinders Island, the last being transported there in January 1832. Many of those named had participated in the Black War, including leading warriors such as Kickerterpoller and Tongelongter. Many others had accompanied Robinson on his various conciliatory missions. There were children born of some of these individuals at Wybalenna (and some children who were born and died there) who have not been named, or whose names and parentage are unaccounted for. For example, in 1833 four unnamed infants' deaths are recorded, with four more in 1834, one dying at birth (Plomley, *Weep in Silence*, pp. 939, 940).

1. DRANETUNNEMINNENER (Woreterleepoodyenninner, Long'un) female.
   Band: Leetermairremener
   Location: St.Patrick's Head
   Notes: Living with sealer James Allen. Died at Wybalenna before March 1839.
   Reference: FM 336, WIS 798, 912 (30).

2. DRIERLERGENERMINER (Queen Elizabeth, Big Bet, Waterloo Bet) female.
   Band: Lairmairrener
   Location: Big River
   Family: Widow of Montpelierata; husband - William Robinson (Pannerbuke) married at Wybalenna 17/7/37.
   Notes: Recorded on FI by Charles Robinson. Age 40 in 1837. Died of pneumonia 17/11/37.
   Reference: WIS 335, 462, 481, 489, 497, 498, 499, 857

3. DROMEDEENNER (Drometehenner, Mary, perhaps Daphne) female.
   Band: Lunetinemairrener
   Location: Swanport, Little Swanport
   Husband: Tremenonener
   Notes: 19 years in 1831.
   Lived with sealer Monroe but escaped. Captured and sent to Straits from Hobarton hospital, 3/3/31 (note confusion with Wild Mary). Alive in 1845.
   Reference: FM 318, 991, WIS 325, 798

4. DRUNAMELIYER (Caroline) female.
   Band: Lairmairrener
   Location: Big River

Family: Husband-Druemerterpunner (Alexander); sister-Woollaytoopinneyer.
Notes: See WIS 855 on confusion. Name attributed to Charles Robinson. Died at Oyster Cove age 73 10/7/60.
Reference: FM 990. WIS 434, 481, 506, 855. Dandridge letters. ML PXD 571

5. KALLERROMTER (Calamarowenye, Tippoo, Tippoo Saib, Jacky) male.
Band: Lairmairremener (Prosser River) or Laymairreme (Little Little Swanport).
Notes: 25 Years in 1837. 48 years in 1860 (Dandridge). One of the killers of Thomas & Parker at Port Sorell. Returned to Oyster Cove in 1847. Died 2/9/60.
Reference: FM 429, 476, 1000. WIS 800. Dandridge letters. Mitchell Library PXD 571

6. KARNEBUTCHER female.
Band: Marwemairrener
Location: near Campbell Town
Husband: Moneneboyerminer
Son: Meellerleetter
Notes: Captured and released to Robinson at Campbell Town. Son taken by John Batman. She was with Robinson on the Big River Mission in 1831, West coast in 1833/34 & last expedition in June/July 1834.
Reference: FM 430, 473 (277), 483, 536, 549, 638, 796, 834, 894. WIS 800.

7. LARCURKENNER (Isaac, native name means 'pigeon') male.
Band: Probably Luggermairrernerpairrer, but could be another.
Location: Great Lake
Notes: Died aged 19 in 1835. 5'7" tall. Captured by an 'armed party'. Possibly the 'child' or 'boy' taken by Robinson at Platform Bluff in 1831.
Reference: WIS 802.

8. LARKUMPINERUNGERNER male.
Band: Mayyerlower
Location: Schouten Island
Notes: Chief in 1820. 'Big man'.
Reference: WIS 802.

9. LEERRATTEMINNER male. (?)
Band: Peengrymairmener/Koannerwe (neither recorded in FM)
Location: East of Campbell Town.
Notes: Could be Marwemairrener (Ellinthorp Hall) band.
Reference: WIS 803.

10. LOOERRYMINER (Boatswain) female.
    Band: Lunetinemairrener
    Location: Little Swanport
    Brother: possibly Weetilleeyer (Arthur) WIS838
    Notes: Sealers' woman, abducted by John Smith, kept by William Proctor. Died before March 1839 at Wybalenna.
    Reference: FM 1015, WIS 805, 912 (46).

11. MACCAMEE (Washington) male.
    Band: Torererpunmairinnerpairener
    Location: Great Lake
    Notes: The second of three killers of Thomas and Parker. Robinson saw him in Launceston Gaol 20/3/31. Discussed the murders with him on FIAS 9/12/36. Returned to Oyster Cove 1847.
    Reference: FM 429, 517, 1000. WIS 399. NLA pic-an3069021.

12. MAYTEPUEMINNER (Maria) female.
    Band: Leetermairremener
    Location: St.Patrick's Head
    Notes: Sealers' woman. Abducted by John Stocker, living with 'Little Charley'. Returned to Oyster Cove 1847.
    Reference: WIS 808, 862. NLA pic-an3069021.

13. MEELLERLEETER male.
    Band: Marwemairrener
    Location: near Campbell Town (Ellinthorp Hall)
    Family: Father-Karnebutcher, Mother-Moneneboyerminer (Dumbrooner)
    Notes: Had lived at Robinson's house with his mother. Surrendered to Headlam (with father & mother) at Campbell Town.
    Reference: FM 81, 549. WIS 808, 810.

14. MEEMELUNNEENER (Myhermenanyehaner) female.
    Band: Lairmairremener
    Location: Prosser River
    Family: Husband – Memelanhelarger. (Should be Memerlannelargenna).
    Notes: With Robinson in north east in Sept 1831. Left on 10th . Buried at Wybalenna before March 1839.
    Reference: FM 423, 474, 480. WIS 808, 811, 912(45).

15. MEMERLANNELARGENNA male.
    Band: Tyerrernotepanner
    Location: Campbell Town
    Family: Wife - Meemelunneener, Brother - Parwarehetar (Lawyer).
    Notes: With Robinson in NE 1831. Left on 10th. Buried at

Wybalenna before March 1839.
Reference: FM 424, 486, 547. WIS 808, 913.

16. MIRNERMANNERME (Maria) female.
Band: Lunetinemairrener?
Location: Little Swanport
Family: Sister - Tanleboneyer
Notes: Aged 20 in 1831. 5'8" tall. Sealers' woman, abducted by James Munro, lived with Kelly on Hunters Island. Removed by Darling to Wybalenna, buried there before Nov 1837.
Reference: WIS 74, 809, 862, 910.

17. MONNEBOYERMINER male.
Band: Marwemairrener
Location: near Campbell Town
Family: Wife - Karnebutcher; Son - Meellerleeter.
Notes: Surrendered at Campbell Town to Headlam, as above.
Reference: FM 81, 549. WIS 810.

18. MONTPELIATTER (Mayerloowermeerlarngener) male.
Band: Lairmairrener
Location: Big (Ouse) River
Family: Wife - Drierlergenerminer (Queen Elizabeth).
Notes: 'Chief' of 'Big River Tribe'. Much interaction with Robinson at Platform Bluff, Dec 1831, captured and sent to Hobart Town with *Mairremmener* remnant, then to Wybalenna. Died before 1836.
Reference: FM 492, 516, 529, 569, 572. WIS 336, 498, 808, 810, 857, 912. Glover drawing ML DL PX 46f.1 (shows 18 Aborigines, 1832).

19. MOOMERERINER (Alexander, Count Alexander, Long Billy) male.
Band: Lairmairrener
Location: Big (Ouse) River
Family: Wife – Drunameliyer.
Notes: 'Thin man'. Alternative name of 'Druemerterpunner' attributed to Charles Robinson. Appointed constable on FI 17/7/37. Age 25 in 1837. Alive in 1845.
Reference: WIS 448, 462, 496,810, 837.

20. NETAWEERARTHEER (Lucy) female.
Band: Lairmairrener
Location: Big River
Notes: Age 35 in 1837. Alive in 1845. Claimed to have lived with Musquito in Hobart. Name attributed to Charles Robinson.
Reference: FM 996. WIS 481, 862.

21 NOOERRER male.
Band: Lairmairrener (Given as 'Wyterweewappo' country 'thirty miles

west of the Peak of Teneriffe').
Location: Big River
Family: Wife - Lenarrerkleanar (Looerryminer, Boatswain); Brother - Marnetti (Peter Pindar).
Notes: Age 28 in 1835. Died at Wybalenna 25/12/35. 5'10" tall.
Reference: WIS 328, 628, 814, 912.

22. NOWWEEPLE female.
Band: Lairmairrener
Location: Big River
Notes: Died at Wybalenna before 16/1/37.
Reference: WIS 814 (33).

23. NUMBLOOTE (Jenny, Semiramis) female.
Band: Pallittore
Location: Western Tiers
Family: Husband (unknown) shot by armed party; later married Maulbotheenner (Timmy).
Notes: Age 20 in 1835. 5'9" tall. Name derived from 'bat'. Died at Wyballena 28/2/39.
Reference: FM 995. WIS 814, 913.

24. PAIRRERTEEMME (Goose) female.
Band: Lunetinemairrener
Location: Swanport
Notes: Sealers' woman. Living with William Slack. Alive 9/1/37, probably returned to Oyster Cove.
Reference: FM 993, 1015. WIS 815.

25. PARWAREHETAR (Lawyer) male.
Band: Tyerrernotepanner
Location: Campbell Town
Family: Brother - Memerlannelargenna
Notes: Accompanied Robinson to west coast in April 1830 but deserted when he found his sister there – a sealers' woman? (Luckerrer-micticwockener). Again with Robinson on west coast May 1833. Died in Hobarton c.1835-36.
Reference: FM 147, 150, 179, 424, 502, 721, 996. WIS 818.

26. PIEYENKOMEYENYER (Wild Mary) female.
Band: Lairmairrener
Location: Big River
Notes: Taken from Hobart hospital to the Straits 3/3/31. Alive in 1845, possibly returned to Oyster Cove. Listed as a 'girl' in 1831. Perhaps 28 years in 1837.
Reference: FM 318, 997. WIS 820.

27. POETIGWERLAYDE male.
Band: Pyedarereme
Location: Eaglehawk Neck
Notes: 'Chief in 1824'.
Reference: WIS 821.

28. POLLERRELBERNER (Judea, Juded, Judy) female.
Band: Leenneratteminnener
Location: St.Patrick's Head
Notes: Sealers' woman, abducted by Michael McKenzie, living with James Thompson on Gun Carriage Is. Rescued by Parish from Babel Is. Perhaps 20 years in 1831.
Reference: FM 290, 995. WIS 821.

29. POOTAPPELUREYANNER male.
Band: Laremairremener
Location: Prosser River/Oyster Bay
Notes: 'Chief (Parngertityer) in 1820'.
Reference: FM 312. WIS 822.

30. PUNGERNEETERLATTENNER (Maria) female.
Band: Leenneratteminnener
Location: St. Patrick's Head
Notes: Sealers' woman, abducted by John Brown, living with John Thomas (Long Tom) on Preservation Is.
Reference: FM 996, 1016. WIS 823.

31. RONEKEENNARENER male.
Band: Not known
Notes: Boy captured by Walpole during the Line Campaign.
Reference: FM 318, 489, 579, 1005(t). WIS 824.

32. RONENE female.
Band: Lairmairrener
Location: Big River
Notes: Died at Wybalenna before 16/11/37. Name = 'head'.
Reference: WIS 824, 909.

33. TANLEBONEYER (Sal) female.
Band: Loontemairenner
Location: Little Swanport
Family: Mother - Tyernelargener, Husband - Mannerlargenna, Sister - Weybermueninner (Tekartee).
Notes: Age about 24 in 1831. A tall woman. Had lived with sealer Jack Brown. With Robinson in the NE October 1830 & W in June 1833. Died 1 May 1835 or 37.
Reference: FM 246, 249, 274?, 291, 395, 737. WIS 825.

34. TENCOTEMANENER (Smoker) female.
Band: Laremairremener
Location: Little Swanport
Family: Sister - Sall? Unlikely, see FM 272.
Notes: Sealers' woman, abducted by Richard Maynard, lived with Mirey & Liddle. 5'9" tall and stout, age 30 in 1831. Wounded by Mannerlargenna while with Robinson at Pipers River, November 1830.
Reference: FM 272, 280, 312, 999. WIS 827.

35. TONGELONGTER (Governor, King William) male.
Band: Poredarereme
Location: Oyster Bay
Family: Wife - Droomteemetyer
Notes: Oyster Bay 'Chief'. Name derived from 'heel of foot' and 'great'. Arm amputated in disputed circumstances. 'Old chief' in December 1831. Taken at Platform Bluff. Died at Wybalenna 20/6/37.
Reference: FM 566, 625, 894, 993, 1001. WIS 319, 829, 908.

36. TUERNINGHE (Pagerly) female.
Band: Probably Nuennone
Location: Bruny Island.
Family: Husband - Kickerterpoller (Black Tom); sister - Nelson.
Notes: Included because of husband. With Robinson on first mission to Port Davey, March 1830. Sent to Straits 3/3/31. With Robinson on final mission, July 1834.
Died at Wybalenna before 16/11/1837.
Reference: FM 131, 318, 362, 894. WIS 815, 831, 909.

37. WELTEPELLLEMEENER (Wymerbunner, Francis, Big Mary's Jemmy) male.
Band: Lairmairrener
Location: Big River
Family: Wife - Tilaway (Big Mary) No record. Daughter - Nancy (Younah).
Notes: 'Big man'. Captured by Walpole during Line Campaign.
Died at Wybalenna 10/5/38.
Reference: FM 318, 579(19), 993, 1005(t). WIS 833, 911.

38. WOBBELTY (Wapperty) female.
Band: Leenneratteminnener
Location: St.Patrick's Head
Family: Father - Mannerlargenner
Notes: Sealer's woman, abducted by John Thomas, lived with John Starker, then John Myteye. Probably Wapperty who died at Oyster Cove 12/8/67.
Reference: FM 301, 1016. WIS 833. ML PXD 571.

39. WOOLLAYTOOPINNEYA female.
    Band: Lairmairrener
    Location: Big River
    Family: Husband - Umarrah (Moleteheerlargenner)
    Notes: Present at the murders of Thomas & Parker at Port Sorell 1831. With Robinson on the Big River Mission 1831, playing an important role. Probably taken to Wybalenna, but died at Emu Bay before 28/5/32.
    Reference: FM 430, 476(280), 540, 541, 542, 554, 609. WIS 834.

40. WOOLLEYERTIDPUNYER female.
    Band: Lairmairrener
    Location: Big River
    Family: Brothers - Weeterliyer (unidentified); 'Big Timmy' (unidenfied). Sister - Woollaytoopnneya.
    Notes: WIS 834.

The following individuals may have been exiled, but do not appear in the censuses taken at Wybalenna settlement, or in burial records:

1. MEENERKERPACKERMINER male
    Band: Larmairremener
    Location: Big (Ouse) River
    Notes: 'Big man'.
    Reference: WIS 808.

2. NUBELENNENER male
    Band: Tyreddeme (given as Poticweladedy).
    Location: Maria Island
    Notes: 'Fine stout young man'.
    Reference: WIS 500, 501, 814.

3. PARTERPUNEMEENNER male.
    Band: Lunetinemairrener
    Location: Little Swanport
    Notes: 'Chief 5-10 years ago'.
    Reference: WIS 818.

5. TOOYERNAMMELARGENNER male.
    Band: Moomairremener
    Location: Pitt Water
    Notes: 'Chief in 1820'. Likely candidate for the Bowen meeting.
    Reference: WIS 829.

6. TYERNELARGENER female.
    Band: Loontemairrener
    Location: Little Swanport
    Family: Mother of Tanleboneyer
    Reference: WIS 831.

Totals: Males — 21
Females — 25

NOTES:

FM: records taken from Plomley, *Friendly Mission.*

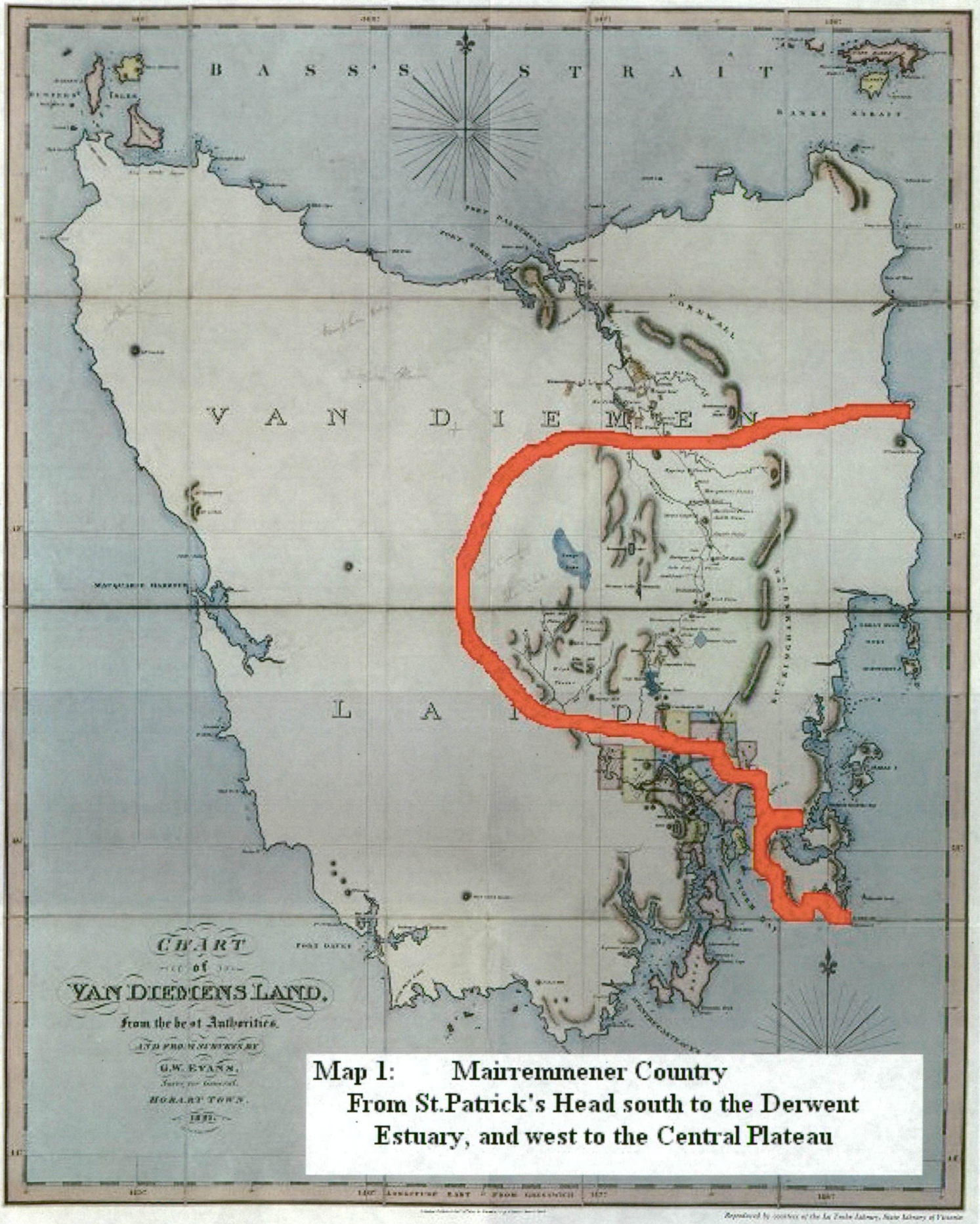
WIS: records taken from Plomley, *Weep in Silence.*

ML: records from the Mitchell Library, Sydney.

NLA: records from the National Library of Australia, Canberra.

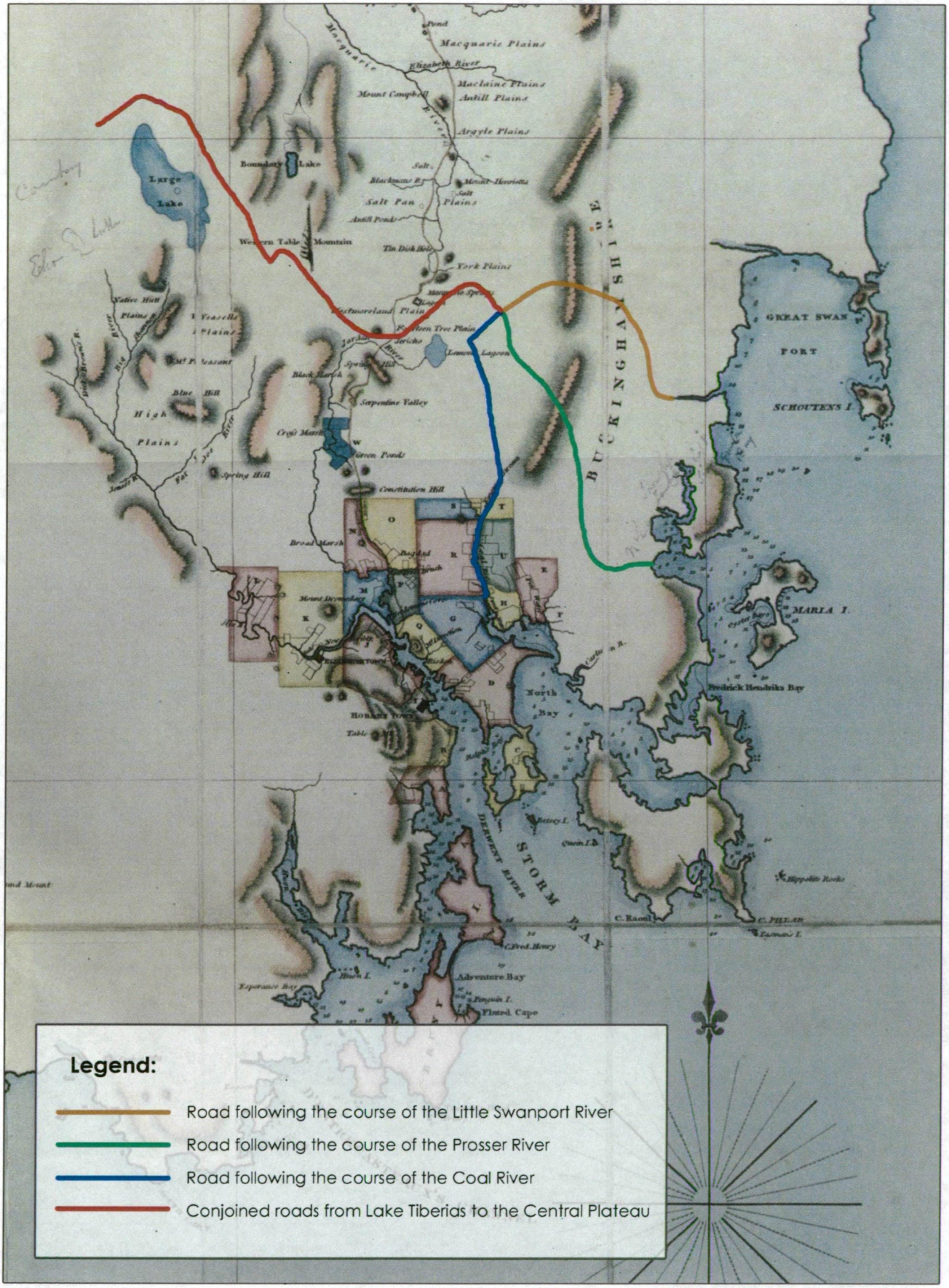
Dandridge Letters: records from Archives Office of Tasmania, Hobart, CSD1/121/4338.

Alternative names were often attributed, such as those indicated in the text as given by Charles Robinson. As the result, some individuals may be duplicated. **(?)** indicates an absence of conclusive records.



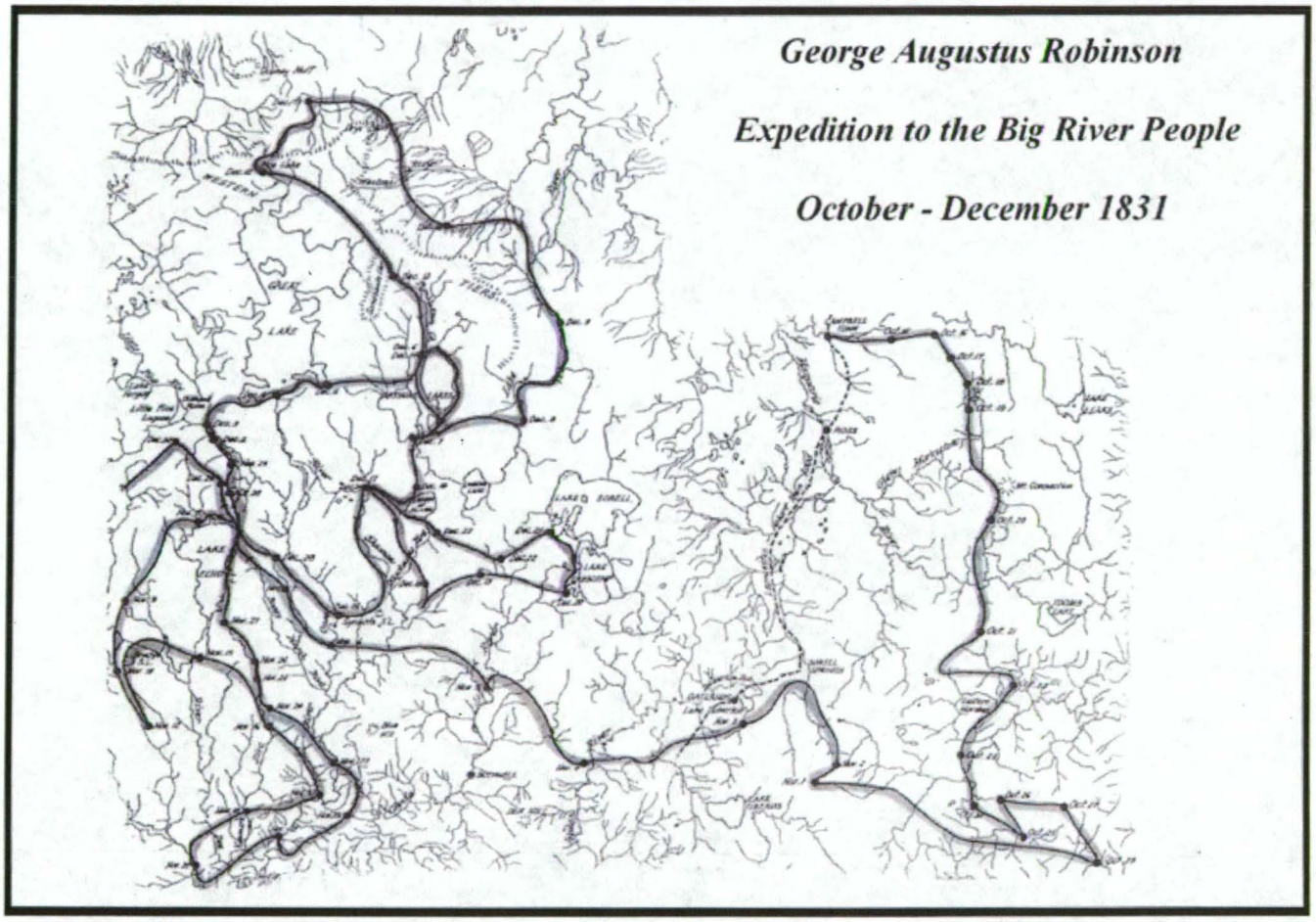
Map 1: Mairremmener Country
From St.Patrick's Head south to the Derwent Estuary, and west to the Central Plateau

Map 2: The Aboriginal Roads from the east coast to the Central Plateau

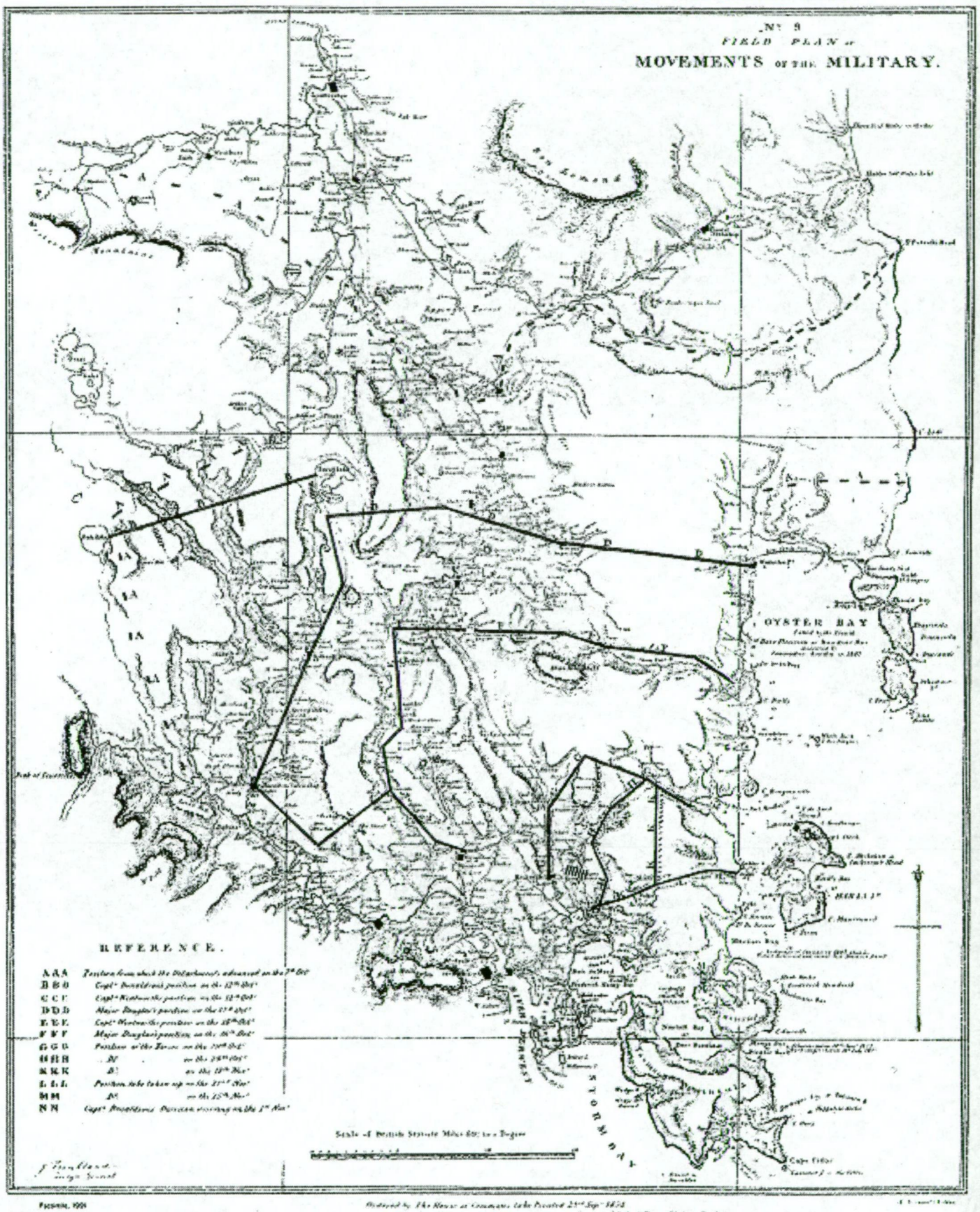


From: *Chart of Van Diemen's Land from the best Authorities, and from surveys by G. W. Evans, Surveyor-General, Hobart Town, 1821*, Hobart: State Library of Tasmania.
Additional cartography by R. Barker, 2009-01-28

Map 3: Chapter 7- The 'Great Conciliator': capture and exile
Robinson's route taken in search of the remnant
Mairremmener bands – pages 210-212

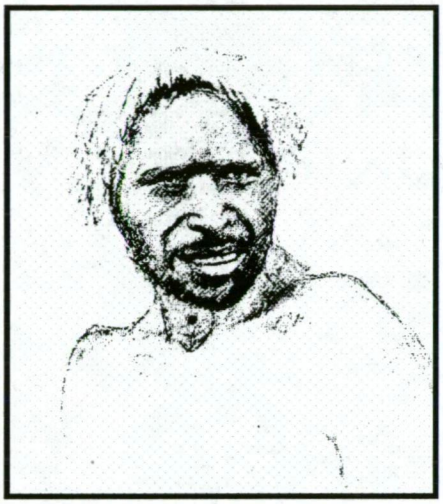


Source: This map is a compilation by D. Patterson (2006) from N.J.B. Plomley, *Friendly Mission: The Tasmanian Journals and Papers of George Augustus Robinson 1829-1834*, Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1966, pp. 499, 537, 555.



MAP 4: Facsimile, 1991, from N.J.B.Plomley (ed), Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land, Hobart: Blubber Head Press, 1991, end papers.

Levée, Line and Martial Law: a history of the dispossession of the Mairremmener *People of Van Diemen's Land 1803-1832*



Literature Review

Graeme Calder BA (Hons)

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
University of Tasmania
February 2009

Levée, line and martial law: a history of the dispossession of the **Mairremmener** *People of Van Diemen's Land, 1803-1835.*

Literature Review

Overview

The purpose of this thesis

The existing histories of the Tasmanian Aborigines have almost invariably been written *in globo*; that is, they have treated the subjects as one people, yet archaeological, anthropological and linguistic studies over many years have clearly established that:

a) The Aboriginal migrants who, over millennia, crossed the then-existing Bassian Plain and occupied the Tasmanian landmass came from several sociolinguist groups from diverse parts of the continent, with no direct associations between each other;

b) They spoke different languages and were culturally separate from each other;

c) They occupied the landmass in a gradual manner, dictated by the climate changes and ecology. Some sociolinguistic groups occupied isolated parts of the landmass, such as the remote southern part of the west coast, and, given the climatic conditions prevailing, developed a semi-sedentary lifestyle, maintaining permanent villages but making regular migrations for cultural purposes. Other sociolinguistic groups such as those in the northeast of the landmass and along and inland of the east coast littoral adapted to a completely nomadic hunting and gathering lifestyle, employing transient camps and maintaining nomadic roads used for cultural migrations over millennia.

d) As the result, perhaps nine distinct sociolinguistic groups were formed, with languages derived from the mainland sources from whence they migrated. The groups maintained "country" within known and accepted, but often amorphous boundaries, usually delineated by water catchments, and perhaps by features such as mountains or the coastal littoral; all of which had spiritual or economic significance;

e) The sociolinguistic groups were not organized into tribal structures. It was more likely that, bound together by a common language, they had a structure organized into bands of between forty and sixty people, and within the bands, several "hearth" groups representing close family relationships. The structure was not necessarily kinship-based: conjugal relationships were exogamous. There were high levels of communality and reciprocity between bands, particularly during nomadic migrations over the traditional roads, which perforce crossed the country of others. As a concomitant to these migrations, communality and reciprocity also at times occurred between sociolinguistic groups.

The implications of this structure is that, for purposes of historical study and explanation, each sociolinguist group should be examined separately, and such studies have begun, initially with Ian McFarlane's doctoral thesis of 2002 entitled *Aboriginal Society in North West Tasmania: Dispossession and Genocide*, now published as *Beyond Awakening: the Aboriginal tribes of north west Tasmania: a history.*[1] My thesis follows, examining the People of the east coast, Midlands and the Central Plateau. Therefore, in terms of adding to the corpus of knowledge of the Aboriginal Tasmanians, these studies develop a more intimate picture of the sometimes sharp differences in Aboriginal culture in Tasmania, and dispel the "one size fits all" historical view that has prevailed to date.

The advantages of these separate studies

The separate examination of each sociolinguistic group enables an in-depth study of sources which would receive less attention in a global history. For example, in recovering the prehistory of peoples where reliance must be placed on scientific studies – particularly archaeological and anthropological surveys – a close study and analysis of works from those disciplines relating to the particular group under review provides scope for more detail and interpretation than a broader historical account would allow. In addition, the use of an extended range of sources is opened up, such

[1] Ian McFarlane, *Aboriginal Society in North West Tasmania: Dispossession and Genocide*, doctoral thesis, University of Tasmania, 2002; Ian McFarlane, *Beyond Awakening: the Aboriginal tribes of northwest Tasmania: a history*, Launceston: Fullers Bookshop, 2008.

as more recent linguistic studies that particularly relate to the subjects being examined, and the ability to use recent technological developments in geographical analysis where applicable. Given the materials, research and technology now available, the opportunity to recover the prehistories and histories of each of the socio-linguistic groups of Tasmania is not only possible; it is required in order to accord the rightful place of each group within the whole; to distinguish between the languages and cultures of each group; and, most importantly, to record the different results of colonization and dispossession upon the several cultures. That was the purpose of McFarlane's thesis, and it is the purpose of mine.

The importance of the history of the Mairremmener *People*

The *Mairremmener* People, comprising perhaps twenty bands and totalling nine hundred to one thousand, occupied the east coast littoral from St. Patrick's Head southwards to the eastern shore of the Derwent estuary, and inland through the Midlands, then onto the Central Plateau.[2] They were a nomadic hunting and gathering People with a culture developed and adapted over at least six millennia. The lands they occupied – their "country" – was the prime coastal littoral, inland savannah and open sclerophyll forest sought after by the British invaders for pastoral and agricultural use, and the People were rapidly dispossessed and expelled during the early years of British occupation, commencing in 1803. By 1832, all *Mairremmener* remnant bands had been exiled to Flinders Island. The confrontation between Aborigines, the government, the military and the settlers during these years was vicious and bloody, with attacks and reprisals on both sides, ending in all-out warfare during the years 1828-1830. The *Mairremmener* People were the prime enemy, expelled by proclamation, eventually outlawed, and the subject of an attempted capture and containment by means of a military operation – the "Line Campaign" of 1830 – of a size and scope unparalleled to that point in Australian colonial history. The campaign involved declarations of martial law and the raising of a civilian army by a *levée en masse*, a unique event in Australia.

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[2] The term *Mairremmener* is used for the People in acceptance of the linguistic works of John Taylor, *A Study of the Palawa (Tasmanian Aboriginal) Place Names*, unpublished Masters Thesis, University of Tasmania, Hobart, 2006. The name replaces the terms 'Oyster Bay tribe' and 'Big River tribe' given by the British settlers to the bands of Aborigines they observed after 1803. My thesis postulates that such tribal divisions did not exist and the names were merely a settler fiction.

The importance of a separate study of these People is therefore apparent. They were central to the history of Van Diemen's Land in its formative years as a British colony. They were among the first to realise that the British had come to stay in 1803. They suffered more violence at the hands of the British invaders than any other sociolinguistic group on the island, given that they were the largest group by population, occupied the very lands the settlers wanted, and stoutly resisted the dispossession, which developed into a fierce war. In the end, they were reduced to a tiny remnant and were exiled to a remote place where dwindling numbers and restrained circumstances made it impossible to sustain their society and culture. To treat their history, as past historical records have done, as merely part of a global narrative of dispossession in Van Diemen's Land is to do an injustice to a unique and once-vibrant society.

An examination of the literature researched

A general comment on the sources

The recovery of the history of an ancient people requires the use of materials and sources beyond that found in manuscripts and texts, either as primary or secondary documentation. Prehistory in particular, that is, the history of a people who had no written language and kept no records in the European sense, must be recovered from archaeological, anthropological and linguistic studies, and through historical geography and earth sciences. Once an unknown (to Europeans) land and its people were "discovered" by exploration, and then scientifically studied, written sources became available and can be used in context. From the moment lands were colonized, extensive official and private manuscripts and papers became available which, at times, gave a voice to the indigenous peoples of the new colonies. Again, when used in context, the latter sources generally provide the most conclusive data.[3] This review of the literature relating to my thesis therefore argues the need for my research under the following heads:

a) Sources recovering prehistory.

b) Sources from the Age of Exploration.

[3] A dialectic used in interpreting historical materials is that of "probability-assumption-speculation", a spectrum ranging from conclusive to fictional. In this thesis, interpretation of prehistory is essentially assumption, while that of exploration and colonial materials, probability. Where speculation is indulged, an appropriate footnote is made.

c) Sources from the Age of Imperialism.

As a final word on proper and place names, following the explanation given in footnote two above, the use of the *Mairremmener* names have been preferred to English names, except where the context demands identification in the given English. The terms "tribes" and "clans" have been discarded (unless required in context) in favour of "People" – indicating a sociolinguistic group – and "band" – indicating a subgroup speaking the common language and sharing the same culture.

Sources recovering prehistory

The sources used under this head are archaeological, anthropological, linguistic and geophysical studies carried out since European "discovery" of Tasmania, and particularly, the most recent of those studies where advanced science has been used in interpretation. The very early studies that could be classified as anthropological are considered under subsequent subheadings.

a) Archaeological studies using modern scientific techniques date from the works of Rhys Jones, commencing in 1963/64. Jones' doctoral thesis of 1971,[4] *Rocky Cape and the problem of the Tasmanians*, was and remains the seminal study which gave a lead to and impetus for further investigations into the prehistory of Tasmania, particularly in developing theories on the manner in which the island was first occupied by *homo sapiens sapiens*. Jones' theories were contemporaneously tested and contested by Harry Lourandos from the Australian National University in his master's thesis, *Coast and hinterland: the archaeological sites of eastern Tasmania*.[5] This latter thesis forms a beginning to an important part of the development of my hypotheses of the prehistory of the *Mairremmener*, as Lourandos examined the country occupied by those People as opposed to Jones, whose initial work was undertaken in the north-west of the island. Both Lourandos and Jones followed their theses with texts expanding the initial interpretations – *Continent of Hunter-*

[4] R. Jones, *Rocky Cape and the problem of the Tasmanians*, Doctoral Thesis, University of Sydney, 1971.
[5] H. Lourandos, *Coast and hinterland: the archaeological sites of Eastern Tasmania*, Masters Thesis, Australian National University, 1970.

Gatherers, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia*, and *Stone Tools as Cultural Markers*[6]. Jones' work developed his theory of the formation of nine 'tribes' on the island, from the first established time of occupation, 35,000 years BP. He allocated English names to these 'tribes' and delineated tribal boundaries. His theories have been largely accepted ever since. Lourandos was less prescriptive, and, as his text was a global study of all Australian Aborigines, he placed the Tasmanians in context, with appropriate comparisons. In that respect, his work was far more valuable for my research, allowing a theory of cultural adaptation of mainland practices to be developed.

While not receiving the high public profile and acceptance of the works of Rhys Jones, a number of archaeological studies of specific areas followed, many involving *Mairremmener* country, and therefore invaluable to my research. Not all were publicly available, in part through the sensitivities and ethics surrounding Indigenous studies in Tasmania. The works of Steve Brown (*Aboriginal Archaeological Resources in South East Tasmania*, 1986, and *Aboriginal Archaeological Sites in Eastern Tasmania*, 1991); Richard Cosgrove (*Aboriginal Economy and Settlement in the Tasmanian Central Highlands*, 1984, and *The Archaeological Resources of Tasmanian Forests*, 1990); and Sue Kee (*Midlands Aboriginal Archaeological Site Survey*, 1990), were particularly valuable, covering the most important parts of *Mairremmener* country, and postulating the routes of the major nomadic "roads", a vital start for my research.[7] An extremely valuable study, not publicly available, was obtained from the Department of Defence (*Buckland Military Training*

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[6] H. Lourandos, *Continent of Hunter-Gatherers: New perspectives in Australian prehistory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997; N. B. Tindale, *Aboriginal Tribes of Australia: their terrain, environmental controls, distribution, limits, and proper names. With an appendix on Tasmanian Tribes by* Rhys Jones, Canberra: Australian National University, 1974; R. V. S. Wright (ed), *Stone Tools as Cultural Markers: Change, Evolution and complexity*, Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1977.

[7] Respectively: Brown, Occasional Paper no. 12, Hobart: National Parks and Wildlife Service Tasmania, April 1986 and Occasional Paper no. 31, Hobart: Department of Parks, Wildlife and Heritage, December 1991; Cosgrove, Occasional Paper no. 27, Hobart: Department of Parks, Wildlife and Heritage, November 1990 and Occasional Paper no. 8, Hobart: National Parks and Wildlife Service of Tasmania, June 1984; Kee, Occasional Paper no. 26, Hobart: Department of Parks, Wildlife and Heritage, October 1990.

Area [BMTA] Environmental Management Plan, 1998).[8] It encompassed two archaeological surveys of the BMTA, examining the numerous Aboriginal sites along the Little Swanport River, a "road" of major importance to my work. The maps and descriptions provided enabled a field study to be undertaken, supplying detail not previously used. The BMTA, being under Commonwealth control for a century and a restricted area, has remained largely untouched, demonstrating a landscape not much separated from that occupied by the original inhabitants, with rock shelters and quarry sites remaining relatively intact. Other particular studies that provided valuable information, and which were carried out by highly respected academics, included Robson and Plomley's investigation of the Gog Range ochre mines in 1982; M. J. Rowland on Holocene era prehistory (1983); Kivisild et al. on the prehistoric settlement of Australia (2007); Cosgrove on migrations within Tasmania during the Pleistocene era (1995), and Lourandos again, on the question of permanent occupation of the Tasmanian highlands (1983).[9] These studies provided support for my hypotheses on the nomadic culture of the People and the nature of the nomadic movements.

b) Geophysical studies supplied the background for the theories of migrations to the Tasmanian landmass across the Bassian Plain. In particular, the works of W. M. Blom (1988), and a reinterpretation of the Bassian Plain flooding by Doug Patterson (2006), were valued sources for confirming the theory of gradual migrations across the Plain.[10] Geographical sources – both historical and modern – also provided

[8] Department of Defence Environmental Consortium, PPK, CMPS&F, Hobart: Department of Defence, 1998.

[9] L. Robson & B. Plomley, 'Mining for ochre by the Tasmanian Aborigines', *Artefact*, vol. 7, June 1982, pp. 3-11; M. R. Rowland, 'Aborigines and environment in Holocene Australia; changing paradigms', *Australian Aboriginal Studies*, no. 2, 1983, pp. 62-77; Toomas Kivisild, et al., 'Revealing the prehistoric settlement of Australia by Y chromosome and mtDNA analysis', *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America*, May 2007, published online: www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.0702928104, accessed June 2007; R. Cosgrove, 'Late Pleistocene behavioural variation and time trends: the case from Tasmania', *Archaeology in Oceania*, vol 30, 1995, pp. 59-78; H. Lourandos, '10,000 years in the Tasmanian highlands', *Australian Archaeology*, vol. 16, 1983, pp. 39-47.

[10] M. Blom, 'Late Quarternary sediments and sea-levels in Bass Basin, south-eastern Australia – a preliminary report', *Search*, vol. 19, no. 2, March-April 1988, pp. 94-96; D. Patterson, personal discussions and details from geophysical modelling, Riawunna, University of Tasmania, 2006.

valuable information. In particular, the historical maps of Van Diemen's Land produced by Evans (1821), Scott (1824), Jorgenson (1827), Hellyer (1828) and Frankland (1835) were of vital importance in demonstrating the rate of dispossession, the routes taken by explorers and surveyors, and the erasing of Aboriginal existence by the allocation of English names to the topographical features.[11] Modern geographical sources used included Tasmap's 1:25000 map series which incorporate extensive historical data. In addition, seven field trips employing GPS technology and photography provided information on the routes of the nomadic roads, the Aboriginal quarry sites and campsites, and the locations referred to in Robinson's journals.

c) Historical linguistic studies were of extreme importance. Four works in particular were extensively used – first, Milligan's *Vocabulary* (1890); secondly, Plomley's *Word-List* (1976); and finally, and most importantly, John Taylor's master's thesis of 2006, and his uncompleted doctoral thesis of 2007.[12] These works provided the information required for place and proper names; assisted in interpretation of Aboriginal attitudes towards white cultural forms; and, in the case of Taylor's works, explicated the manner in which the bands formed, dispersed and settled over the landmass. These works also assisted me in determining the populations of band and socio-linguist groupings, and the inter-band and inter-group associations. Other authors whose works were used in the

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[11] *Chart of Van Diemen's Land from the best Authorities, and from surveys by G. W. Evans, Surveyor-General, Hobart Town, 1821*, Hobart: State Library of Tasmania, CRO 912.46 EVA; *Chart of Van Diemen's Land from the best Authorities and from actual surveys &Measurements by Thomas Scott, Assistant Surveyor Gen'l of Lands on the Island. Most respectfully dedicated to His Honour W. Sorell Esq. Lieut.Governor of Van Diemen's Land & c., &c., &c. 1824*, Canberra: National Library of Australia, TL Map 880a; *Map to Accompany Report Dated 10th Feb'y 1828, Henry Hellyer, Aty Sur'y, Van Diemen's Land Company*, Canberra: National Library of Australia, MAP F213; *Map of the North-West Quarter of Van Diemen's Land to Accompany the Third Annual Report of the Van Diemen's Land Company*, Hobart: State Library of Tasmania; *Map of Van Diemen's Land Dedicated to the Land Holders of the Colony by their faithful servant George Frankland, Surveyor-General & Commissioner of Crown Lands*, 1835, Canberra: National Library of Australia, MAP rm1216; *Sketch of Northern Tasmania showing Jorgensen's exploration routes, 1827*, Canberra: National Library of Australia, MAP F207.

[12] Joseph Milligan, *Vocabulary: Dialects of Some of the Aboriginal Tribes of Tasmania*, Hobart: Government Printer, 1890; N.J.B.Plomley, *A word-list of the Tasmanian aboriginal languages*, Launceston: published by the Author in association with the Government of Tasmania, 1976; Taylor, uncompleted PhD thesis, 2007.

determination of factors relating to language included G.A. Robinson (*Friendly Mission* and *Weep in Silence*), and Jorgen Jorgenson (*The Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land*). These latter works will be referred to as the most valued sources in the section headed 'The Age of Imperialism'.

d) The fourth means of exploring the prehistory of nomadic societies arose through the method of comparative study. After careful review, I selected two nomadic societies whose populations and band structures were generally similar to those of the *Mairremmener*. In the case of the Absarokee (Crow) People of the Plains in the United States, considerable literature was available. The works of Robert Lowie, Frederick E. Hoxie and Jeffrey Ostler in particular, were of great value in explicating the nature of that society, and of its relations with the colonial dispossessors.[13] In the case of the second society – the !Kung of the Kalahari in Namibia and Botswana – the works of the doyens of the study of nomadic hunter-gathers, Richard B. Lee and Irven De Vore, were of inestimable value.[14] Articles by those authors, together with several by South African anthropologists, were also of prime importance; however, the most valuable work was that of the late Susan Kent, who, among other important issues, drew attention to the diversities among hunter-gatherer societies, and the inherent dangers in drawing similarities or commonalities.[15] The material in the comparative studies added a great deal to the understanding of nomadism as a cultural trait, a theory which was used to explicate the nature of *Mairremmener* society in prehistory.

e) Finally, an important part of the prehistorical record was the nature of Aboriginal diet, a factor affecting the tool kit, health, population and

[13] R.H.Lowie, *The Crow Indians*, Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983 (first published 1935; Frederick E. Hoxie, *Parading Through History: The making of the Crow Nation in America* 1805-1935, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995; J. Ostler, *The Plains Siouxand US Colonialism From Lewis and Clark to Wounded Knee*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004; and numerous articles by those historians.

[14] Lee & De Vore, *Kalahari Hunter-Gatherers: Studies of the !Kung and their Neighbours*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976.

[15] S. Kent, 'The Current Forager Controversy: Real Versus Ideal Views of Hunter-Gatherers', *Man*, New Series, vol. 27, no. 1, (March 1992).

nomadic movements. Archaeologists such as Jones, Lourandos and others had noted and postulated the reasons for the absence of cartilaginous fish bones in coastal middens, an observation which led to the conclusion that the Tasmanians had abandoned those species as part of their diet from around 6000 BP, therefore dispensing with the need for fish hooks or nets. The most comprehensive and valuable study however, was made by Betty Hiatt in analysing all reports, hearsay and otherwise, of the foods used by Aborigines. That study, together with a similar one made by Brian Plomley and Mary Cameron, not only provided the necessary information on diet, but also gave a clear indication of nomadic movements, Hiatt in particular disassociating those movements with food quest .[16]

Sources from the Age of Exploration

The sources researched under this head were primarily the journals and charts of the European explorers and scientists who scoured the world for "discoveries" in the name of science, religion and progress in the eras of the Enlightenment and Evangelical movement. While the very early explorers, beginning with Abel Janzoon Tasman, left minimal information on Tasmanian societies, the later French and British expeditions had specific objectives aimed at the furtherance of both imperial aims and the advancement of scientific knowledge. However, there exists a considerable difference in the quality and value of the information on the Tasmanians. The French expeditions of Bruny d'Entrecasteaux of 1793 and Nicolas Baudin of 1802 contrasted sharply with the British expeditions of James Cook (1772-1775 and 1777), Bligh (1788) and Flinders and Bass (1798). While the British expeditions were essentially aimed at discovery of lands for mercantile exploitation or for the furtherance of cartography and hydrography, the French expeditions were genuinely scientific in nature; well-equipped and manned by scientists not only with botanical skills, but also by men familiar with the new science of anthropology – the science of the study of man, a French development. The French carried the support of their societies of Natural History and the Observateurs de l'Homme, scientific institutions providing

[16] B.Hiatt, 'The Food Quest and Economy of the Tasmanian Aborigines', *Oceania*, Vol. 38, nos. 2, 3, 1967-68; B. Plomley & M. Cameron, 'Plant Foods of the Tasmanian Aborigines', *Records of the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery,* No. 101, Launceston, 1993.

guidelines for the study of natural history. The expeditions also carried skilled artists, whose works, while criticised as 'classical in form', provided an insight into Tasmanian societies never before realised. The journals of the French expeditions were comprehensive and illuminating; those of the British generally brief and cursory; perhaps a reflection of the differing attitudes towards the 'savage' and 'uncivilized' Indigenes encountered.

Important analyses of these voyages of discovery of Tasmania were made by Brian Plomley (in conjunction with Josiane Piard-Benier) in 1983 and 1993, generally acknowledging the differences in quality between the British and French journals. A later very useful analysis of the French expeditions was made by Stephanie Anderson in 2001, where, in a similar manner, she pointed out the difference in the quality of observations, particularly noting that

> the voyages of d'Entrecasteaux and Baudin can be placed in what is paradigmatically thought of as the spirit of the Enlightenment: a voracious scientific appetite for knowing the natural world, including human beings, as part of nature even if they were still dedicated to God, and the view, partly because the divine perspective still held sway, that human beings though different in different climes, were one.[17]

However, the difficulty with all these scientific observations is the limited number of societies studied and, particularly, the context of the studies, accepting as they did the received belief in the progress of man from a savage to a civilized (in Western terms) state of existence. Plomley, Anderson and others pointed out the failure of Péron, a scientist on the Baudin expedition, to observe Degérando's memoir *Considerations about the different methods to be followed in the observation of savage peoples*, in which the author required the scientist to learn the language of the peoples, to live among them for a time in order to study their culture, and, particularly, to abjure the tendency of explorers 'to judge indigenous customs by inappropriate European analogies'.[18] Péron's failure was almost a universal one: the exceptions being the studies carried out by the later colonial (and non-scientific) personages in the form of Robinson and Jorgenson, discussed next. The results of those failures lead to a long-

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[17] N.J.B. Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition and the Tasmanian Aborigines 1802*, Hobart: Blubber head Press, 1983; B. Plomley & J. Piard-Bernier, *The General: The visits of the expedition led by Bruny d'Entrecasteaux to Tasmanian waters in 1792 and 1793*, Launceston: Queen Victoria Museum, 1993; S. Anderson, 'French anthropology in Australia, a prelude' & 'French anthropology in Australia, the first fieldwork report', *Aboriginal History*, vol. 24 (2000) & vol. 25 (2001), pp, 212-223 & 228-242.
[18] Anderson, p. 230.

term and persistent misconception of the nature of the Aboriginal societies in Tasmania.

In respect of my research, the literature available under this sub-heading was limited in the extreme. Even the French journals (particularly from Baudin's expedition) and the commentaries on them were restricted in the main to the Aboriginal Peoples of Bruny Island (generally the first landfall for all expeditions), the d'Entrecasteaux Channel and the Huon Valley. The studies of these People were relatively comprehensive: the studies of the *Mairremmener* People to the north of the Derwent estuary limited to the studies of the Baudin expedition, and to the brief encounters with British freebooters such as John Hayes in 1792, and James Cox in 1789.[19] Cox, at least, had the most contact with the People, and his journals gave an albeit brief description of them which supported and supplemented the later and more comprehensive details from the Baudin journals. A second problem with all the observations was their limitation to the People encountered on the east coast littoral: little effort was made to venture inland. Consequently, the nomadic traits of the *Mairremmener* were not recorded. A particular gap in recorded history during this period related to the activities of the sealers and whalers operating in Bass Strait and along the eastern seaboard of Van Diemen's Land at the turn of the eighteenth century. Virtually no records exist, except for the brief reports in *Historical Records of Australia* and *New Zealand*. However, even from those limited sources, the concern of the British government at the activities of the sealers, and especially at the kidnapping or coercing of Indigenous peoples was obvious: Maoris in particular were victims. It would be surprising, given later activities of these generally lawless sailors, that Tasmanians, and women in particular, were not among the captives.

Without downplaying the value of the journals of Cook, Furneaux and Bligh among the British explorers, and those of d'Entrecasteaux and Baudin and their respective scientists among the French, the paucity of literature definitely restricted my research of this period, and assumptions had to be made based on the limited material available.

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[19] R.W.Giblin, *The Early History of Tasmania: The Geographical Era 1642-1804*, London: Methuen & Co., 1939, p. 86.

Sources from the Age of Imperialism

Literature under this head was gathered from three periods, primarily reflecting the nature of colonial dispossession in Van Diemen's Land, but also influenced by the extent of material available. The three periods, each appearing as a separate chapter in my thesis, were:

(a) 1803-1813: the period of the initial decision to colonize Van Diemen's Land, and the time of establishment of the northern and southern settlements.

(b) 1813-1824: the period of exploration and tentative expansion into *Mairremmener* country, influenced by the decision to promote immigration.

(c) 1825-1832: the period of rapid expansion and dispossession under the supervision of a new and experienced viceroy, Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur, and the time of the Black War and the Line Campaign.

The literature will be reviewed under each head.

(a) 1803-1813.

During this period, primary materials concerning the Risdon and Sullivan's cove settlements were limited, the main source being despatches recorded in *Historical Records of Australia* (*HRA*). Works not proximate to the time, but written many years later by contemporary participants, included the memoir of John Pascoe Fawkner, who was a child at the time of first settlement, and histories by Henry Melville, John West, James Bonwick, James Erskine Calder and others. While the first Lieutenant-Governor, David Collins, had written extensively of his earlier experiences with the First Fleet in New South Wales, he did not repeat the effort in Van Diemen's Land, perhaps for the reasons canvassed in my thesis. The much discussed affray at Risdon Cove in 1804 has an extensive historiography which is summarised in Appendix two of my thesis. Many of these studies (which investigate and comment on that singular and seminal occurrence), provided some background and understanding of Aboriginal attitudes towards the white invaders, and the growing awareness that they had come to stay. The value of the Risdon debate is succinctly summarised by Henry Reynolds, when he noted that 'The

very real difficulties of determining how many blacks were killed by Europeans [during the colonization of Van Diemen's Land] can be illustrated by considering the so-called Risdon massacre'.[20]

The most valuable source consulted were the diaries of the Reverend Robert Knopwood, an original settler who kept his diaries for some time before the landing at Sullivan's Cove in 1803, and maintained them until June 1838. The diaries for the period 1809-1813 are missing.[21] Knopwood was the first chaplain of the new colony, and as such, was close to the administration, and was the keeper of such records as births and deaths. He was also an avid ship-watcher, and recorded the comings and goings of ships in the harbour. His diaries were written in a homely, everyday style, recording visitors and relatively mundane events, but at times noting details of Aboriginal culture and activities. Particularly useful was his record of the weather, and his notes on anthropogenic firing of the country: notes which lead me to a conclusion upon the skills of the Aborigines in determining the right time to light fires.

The absence of official reports on the daily activities of the new colony was the result of the destruction of Collins' papers by Lieutenant Edward Lord, following Collins' death in 1810. However, Marie Fels located a series of government orders for the period 1808-1810, which provided valuable information on the nature of the conflicts between Aborigines and the settlers; essentially conflicts over the killing of Kangaroos by white hunters in order to supply meat for a starving settlement.[22] The information Fels extracted from those orders indicated the escalating clashes, not only as the result of the kangaroo hunting, but also through the increasing incursion of settlers into *Mairremmener* country. Fels also considered the interactions between sealers, stock keepers and Aborigines. She drew on the journal of the sealer and whaler Captain Amaso Delano during his time at Hobart Town in 1804, where he provided what purported to be a comprehensive observation *Mairremmener* People after one

[20] H. Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People*, Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1995, p. 76.
[21] M. Nicholls (ed), *The Diary of the Reverend Robert Knopwood 1803-1838*, Hobart: Tasmanian Historical Research Association, 1977.
[22] M. Fels, 'Culture Contact in the County of Buckinghamshire, Van Diemen's Land 1803-11',*Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 29, no. 2, 1982, pp. 47-79.

contact. His journal not only refers to the journals of Captain Cook's expeditions, but reads in a like (plagiaristic?) vein, incorporating similar observations as those of Furneaux, and of those of Baudin. It may be that Delano was widely-read.[23]

Outside those valuable documents, the literature on this period is sparse, and generally not proximate, and further, not particularly related to the *Mairremmener*, who appear to have retired from the settled districts and avoided conflict where they were able. In the absence of regular newspapers (only one was published briefly in the period under review) the activities of the Aborigines generally went unreported, and public opinion is unknown.[24]

In summary, the history of the period from 1803 to 1813 relies in the main on government reports and orders, and on the diary assiduously kept by one man, and there is little in any primary source on the *Mairremmener* People. It was a time of relatively little contact between the People and the invaders, a situation which apparently suited both parties. My effort in the thesis was to collate as much material specifically on the *Mairremmener* as was available, and to analyse and use it in an empathetic reconstruction of their society at the time of invasion.

(b) 1814-1824

During this period two new viceroys governed the colony – Thomas Davey, from February 1813 to April 1817, and William Sorell, from April 1817 to May 1824. While both administrations were, in respect of record-keeping, a distinct improvement on that of Collins, most primary material on the *Mairremmener* was found in the *HRA*, supplemented by some extensive newspaper reports in the now-regular publications out of Hobart Town in the form of the *Hobart Town Gazette* (the journal of government record), the *Hobart Town Courier*, and the *Colonial Times*. The problem with official reports and despatches from the *HRA* is the universal one: that they must be read in context, in particular, that of officials

[23] Amaso Delano, *A Narrative of a Voyage to New Holland and Van Diemen's Land*, facs. ed. 1973, Hobart: Cox Kay. The tale of the sailor captured and disrobed by the Aborigines resonates with the similar tale in Baudin's journals; see Plomley, *The Baudin Expedition*, pp. 108, 109. On the other hand, I may be doing Delano an injustice.

[24] The *Derwent Star and Van Diemen's Land Intelligencer* was published bi-weekly from January 1810 to February 1812. The *Hobart Town Gazette*, the journal of government record, commenced publication in June 1816. The *Van Diemen's Land Gazette and General Advertiser* was published for two months in 1814.

justifying their actions and at times using special pleadings in exculpation of acts done contrary to government policy or instructions from the Colonial Office. In the case of newspaper reports, the Hobart Town newspaper editors were partisan, at times in the extreme, the *Courier* taking the side of the administration, the *Times* often opposing it. Editorials were often deliberately polemical in nature, in order to conjure up controversy. Again, these reports had to be reshaped by their context into an understanding of the effects upon Aboriginal culture of the now-rapidly increasing incursions into and the dispossession of *Mairremmener* country, and the growing numbers of violent, often fatal, clashes between the Aborigines and the settlers as the result.

Fortunately, these sources were able to be supplemented by a good number of settler publications: works by James Ross, David Burn and James Kelly are examples of reasonably erudite commentary on the culture of the Aboriginal bands, and, to some degree, on the effects of colonization upon the People. Ross, for one, displayed some empathy towards them, and sympathy for their plight.[25] On the other hand, a series of booster publications were published during this period, aimed at encouraging migration to Van Diemen's Land. This raft of books, headed by that of the late Deputy Surveyor-General, George Evans, painted a benign picture of the Aborigines, certainly not reflecting reality, and certainly not reflecting the opinions of the *Mairremmener* People, who were simply not considered worthy of consultation.[26] The value of these texts is limited to the explanation of the demands for Aboriginal lands for the immigrants; demands resulting from the 1823 report of Commissioner John Bigge on the future of the Van Diemen's Land colony.[27] That report proved of far more value in setting out

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[25] James Ross, *Dr Ross's recollections of a short excursion to Lake Echo in Van Diemen's Land, 1823*, Adelaide: Sullivan's Cove, 1992; Ross, *The Settler in Van Diemen's Land*, North Melbourne: Marsh Walsh Publishing, 1975; David Burn, *A Picture of Van Diemen's Land*, Hobart: Cat & Fiddle Press, 1973; J.E.Calder (ed), *The Circumnavigations of VDL in 1815 by James Kelly and in 1824 by James Hobbs*, Adelaide: Sullivan's Cove, 1984. In Ross's case, perhaps too erudite!

[26] G.W.Evans, *A Geographical, Historical, and Topographical Description of Van Diemen's Land, etc*, London: John Souter, 1822, and many others noted in my thesis, Chapter five. W.C.Wentworth's version was ludicrous – he only once briefly visited Hobart Town *en route*!

[27] J. Bigge, *Report of the Commissioner of Inquiry, on the State of Agriculture and Trade in the Colony of New South Wales*, 10th January 1823; J. Ritchie, *Punishment and Profit, the reports of Commissioner John Bigge on the Colonies of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land, 1822-1823; their origins, nature and significance*, Melbourne: Heinemann, 1970.

the aims of the British government, even though it was relatively silent on the government's intentions in respect of the Aborigines.

The other primary source that proved of inestimable value, were the papers of Thomas Scott, assistant surveyor in the Land Survey Department during the period. His many field trips took him into *Mairremmener* country, especially on the Central Plateau, where his description of the Aboriginal use of the land, which, together with his sketches, albeit rudimentary, gave an insight into Aboriginal culture not found in published texts.[28] In addition, the James Erskine Calder papers in the Mitchell Library, Sydney, provided substantial information on Aboriginal culture during this period, and were of immense value in researching the final years, when Calder was actually in the colony. He was an avid collector of historical materials, much of which related to the early days of the colony. Calder was another public servant and settler who demonstrated a profound empathy with and sympathy for the Aborigines.[29] Allied to these manuscripts, other primary sources used in my thesis were the maps prepared by officers of the Land Survey Department, and by the Land Commissioners. Maps are an oft-neglected source of historical information, providing, as they do, the nature of the growth of dispossession, and particularly, indicating the official obliteration of Aboriginal existence by the allocation of English names for geographical and topographical features. Particularly important maps were those prepared by George Evans (1821), Thomas Scott (1824), Henry Hellyer (1828), Jorgen Jorgenson (1827), George Frankland (1835), and of immense importance, the map attached to the Land Commissioners' Report of 1828, prepared by Commissioner Roderic O'Connor.[30] This last map forms an attachment to the Land Commissioners' journals, providing information not only on the dates which settlers occupied Aboriginal lands, but also on the interaction between Aborigines and settlers, and on the effects of sequestration of Aboriginal lands. O'Connor, the sole author of these journals (even though there were three commissioners), was an assiduous and careful diarist, and another who displayed some empathy towards the Aborigines.

[28] *Thomas Scott Papers*: MS A606, A1055, B40, B41, B213, B214, Sydney: Mitchell Library.
[29] *Calder Papers*: MS A589-A592, A594, A597, A599, A600-A602, A605, Sydney: Mitchell Library.
[30] The references for theses maps appear on pages 265 and 266 of my thesis; A. McKay (ed), *Journal of the Land Commissioners for Van Diemen's Land 1826-1828*, Hobart: University of Tasmania, 1962.

The importance of surveying, naming and alienating lands for private use by settlers has been mentioned above. A primary source which confirmed the policy of the British government in this regard was the journals of the inspections of Van Diemen's Land carried out by Governor Lachlan Macquarie in 1810 and 1822. Apart from determining that the lands of the new colony should be rapidly exploited by immigration from the home country, as the sole authority on the allocation of placenames, Macquarie did his utmost – considerably more than any other individual – to eliminate all traces of the existence of Aborigines in the island, by means of daubing the countryside and its features with English names, mainly in recognition of his Scottish homeland, or in acknowledgement of his relatives and friends and other personages of importance.[31]

Finally, in respect of this period, there was another source of major importance – the ubiquitous Jorgen Jorgenson. Criticised by Plomley, A. L. Meston and others for exaggeration, for self-serving works, and for hagiographical adulation (in the case of Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur), Jorgenson spent more time in *Mairremmener* country than any other colonist apart from George Augustus Robinson. In particular, he was the only observer of the period to point out the enormous cultural differences between socio-linguistic groups, and was a close observer and reporter of Aboriginal society. His published works (some posthumous, some not directly attributed), included his *Journal when on an expedition of Discovery in Van Diemen's Land, 2nd Septr 1826*; *A Shred of an Autobiography* (1835); and *A Narrative of the Habits, Manners, and Customs of the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land.* His unpublished works of extreme importance included *Report to Thomas Anstey of an expedition from Oatlands to Waterloo Point VDL, to investigate a new line of road, 24 May to 3 June* 1829, and *Report of the proceedings of an armed party of rangers, 28 February 1831* (together with numerous other reports of his activities in command of roving parties). These two reports, and especially the latter, contain vital information on such matters as the rapid decline in *Mairremmener* numbers over the period and

[31] Lachlan Macquarie, *Journals of His Tours in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land 11810-1822,* Sydney: Library of Australian History, 1979. There are *two* Elizabeth Towns in Tasmania, both presumably recognising Macquarie's wife!

the effects of the burgeoning white population.[32] The first gave a firm indication of the route of the important Aboriginal road from the mouth of the Little Swanport River to Lake Tiberias.

It can be seen from the bibliography attached to my thesis that the sources of both primary and secondary information on this period were extensive when compared to the first period, a factor of the expanding white settlement, the growing confrontations between Aborigines and settlers, and also of the better record-keeping by the government. Commentators, both contemporary and later, generally portray this period as one of relative calm and steady growth of the colony. My thesis, using much the same material (but with a keener sift through archival papers in the AOT and the Mitchell and Latrobe Libraries), reveals a quite different picture from the *Mairremmener* viewpoint: one of a growing realization that the settlers and the responsible government had no intention of allowing them to remain in their country, but intended to drive them out or 'extirpate' them if they failed to accept British 'civilization'. That realization lead the *Mairremmener* into the Black War, as covered in Chapter six.

(c) 1825-1832

This is the "Arthur' period, the time of actions taken by the viceroy which ensured the end of the *Mairremmener* society. The sources here, both primary and secondary, are vast in number – in part due to Arthur's insistence on comprehensive record-keeping – but are somewhat repetitive and one-sided in nature. They emphasised the role of and the effect on the white population, both due to the violence between Aborigines and settlers, and in the role of the British government and the settlers during the so-called 'Black War', particularly during the Line Campaign of 1830. Most show little empathy towards the Aborigines, and less sympathy, highlighting for example the numbers of settlers killed,

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[32] J. Jorgenson, *Journal when on an Expedition of Discovery in Van Diemen's Land 2nd Septr 1826*, transcribed by Thomas Scott, Earlston; *A Shred of an Autobiography, 1835*, facs, ed, Hobart: Blubber Head Press, 2001; N.J.B.Plomley, *Jorgen Jorgenson and the Aborigines of Van Diemen's Land being a reconstruction of his 'lost' book on their customs, habits, and on his role in the roving parties and the Black Line*, Hobart: Blubber Head Press, 1991; *Report of an Armed Party of Rangers, 28th February 1831*, Archives Office of Tasmania, CSO1/1/320/7578/351-408; *report to Thomas Anstey of an expeditionfrom Oatlands to Waterloo Point VDL, to investigate a new line of road, 24 May to 3 June 1829*, Allport Library and Art Gallery, Hobart, MSS Box 36 Folder 11.

particularly women and children, and downplaying (or even ignoring) the numbers of Aboriginal victims.

This period was the most important in its effects on the *Mairremmener.* They *were* the enemy, central to government policy of exclusion and exile. Thus official documentation is complete (and mostly exculpatory), not the least because Arthur ensured that all his actions were recorded for posterity, in demonstration of his obedience and diligence in following official policies. Ann Curthoys noted four kinds of settler narratives, which she assigned to stages of colonization. As a commentary in my thesis, I wrote:

> The first were the early narratives which '"Defended colonisation itself, as ordained by God and necessary for the advance of humanity"'. The second, dating from the end of the nineteenth century, were those of the colonist 'as the original inhabitant of the land where the Indigenous people had either already died out or were destined to do so.' The third and fourth kinds of narratives intersected during the latter part of the twentieth century, where initially 'Indigenous people and their issues with the past resurfaced and reframed the narrative to acknowledge that the settler's battle with the land included the dispossession of the Aborigines'; quickly followed by reactive narratives of rejection of prior Aboriginal ownership, for 'fear of losing the land [the settlers] have won and of being displaced by people they had defeated a century before.'[33]

While this comment was directed at the Risdon Cove affray of 1804, it is apposite to all the settler narratives and subsequent histories of Van Diemen's Land as related to the period under review. Histories are generally written by the colonial victors, and the voices of the defeated Indigenes were rarely recorded. It was therefore necessary to seek out the more empathetic texts and documents over the four 'stages' of colonization, in order to extract or reconstruct Aboriginal "voices" during the period.

As to primary sources, as mentioned above, the finest source was the journals of George Augustus Robinson, read in the context of Robinson's devout evangelistic beliefs, his relatively poor standards of education, and his somewhat dismissive comments on Aboriginal spirituality and cosmology. Aside from Jorgenson (and perhaps later commentators in Calder and G. W. Walker), no other colonial diarist, wittingly or otherwise, observed Degérando's dictum for the study of man: learn the language and the customs by living amongst those to be studied. Robinson did observe that dictum, probably unwittingly, although as his ambition and desire for rewards grew his attitude towards the Peoples changed, reflected in his activities as

[33] My thesis, pp. 308, 309.

superintendent of the Flinders Island establishment, and later as the Protector of Aborigines in Victoria. Jorgenson too, demonstrated (again probably unwittingly) the benefits of the use of Degérando's dictum, having as previously noted, spent more time amongst the *Mairremmener* than any other apart from Robinson. His works reflected the empathy and understanding necessary to extract and amplify the Aboriginal "voices"; particularly their opinions on the effects of dispossession and destruction of their society.

Of the earliest narratives, those least defending colonization, or at least demonstrating an empathy with its victims, appear in Henry Melville's 1835 *History of the Island of Van Diemen's Land*; in John West's 1852 *History of Tasmania*; in James Erskine Calder's *Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, habits &c., of the Native Tribes of Tasmania* (together with his numerous other works, including many newspaper articles written from the 1850s onwards); and James B. Walker's compilation of the papers he read before the Royal Society of Tasmania, particularly the extracts from the journals of his father, the Quaker missionary George Washington Walker.[34] These works embody the "voices" of the Aborigines, drawing out the despair of the *Mairremmener* People, a tiny remnant by 1832, and specifically detailing their feelings towards the violence and dispossession.

In the later 'stages', those of 'extinction', of renewal and revival of Aboriginal heritage, and of the reaction to that revival, the empathetic views are found in Bonwick's *The Last of the Tasmanians*; in Ling Roth's *The Aborigines of Tasmania*; and particularly in Brian Plomley's commentary on Robinson's Flinders Island journals in his book *Weep in Silence*. Plomley's analysis of those records, and his inclusion of numerous appendices summarising births, deaths, illnesses and other events at the Wybalenna establishment are of inestimable value for the history of the Tasmanians, and for the *Mairremmener* People and my thesis in particular. He gave prominence to Aboriginal names over given English names, a measure of his empathy for the People. The debt historiography owes to the late Brian Plomley can never be met: his corpus of works, ranging as it does over archaeology, anthropology, botany

[34] Melville, previous reference; West, *The History of Tasmania*, A.G.L.Shaw (ed), Sydney: Angus & Robertson, 1971; Calder, *Some Account of the Wars, Extirpation, Habits, &c., of the Native Tribes of Tasmania*, Hobart Town: Henn & Co., 1875; Walker, *Early Tasmania: Papers read before the Royal Society of Tasmania during the years 1888 to 1899*, Hobart: Government printer, 1989.

and the natural sciences, and even medicine, has provided an unparalleled source for the study of the Tasmanians. Those works were, for my purposes, priceless. They enabled me at the least to reconstruct some "voices" of the dispossessed, and, for the first time, to compile a list of the *Mairremmener* People captured and exiled on Flinders Island, and of the sad remnant returned in 1847 to Oyster Cove. Again, the Calder papers were extremely useful, the letter from Walter George Arthur to G. W. Walker – collected by Calder – giving a valuable insight into the desperation felt by the survivors at Wybalenna.

The last two 'stages', that is, the acknowledgement of the nature of colonial dispossession of indigenous peoples, followed by the rejection of notion of taking responsibility for the sins of the past – the rejection of the works of the 'black armband' theorists – came to prominence in Tasmania with those of Lyndall Ryan, beginning with her thesis of 1975, and then her text of 1981 based on that thesis, *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, and included a number of her journal articles, particularly, 'The Risdon Cove Massacre' and 'Patterns of Migration in Tasmania'. Ryan's research was followed by Henry Reynolds in three seminal works: *Fate of a Free People* (1995); *This Whispering in Our Hearts* (1996); *An Indelible Stain? The Question of Genocide in Australia's History* (2001).[35] It can be taken that Reynolds works, in particular, signalled the beginning of the so-called 'history wars'. Reynolds' scholarship, although challenged by the rejectionists as noted under, opened the path to closer and more detailed examination of the structure and culture of the diverse Tasmanian societies. For my research, his works have provided a guiding light in explicating the nature of *Mairremmener* society, and of its tragic and conclusive destruction. Two recent works which add enormously to the corpus of knowledge of the Tasmanians, and which proved useful in my research, were those of James Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land* (2008), and that of my colleague Ian McFarlane, *Beyond Awakening: the Aboriginal tribes of North West Tasmania* (2008)[36].

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[35] Ryan, *The Aborigines in Tasmania, 1800-1974 and their problems with the Europeans*, PhD thesis, School of Historical, Philosophical and Political Studies, Macquarie University, 1975; *The Aboriginal Tasmanians*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1981; Reynolds, *Fate of a Free People*, Ringwood: Penguin Books, 1995; *This Whispering in Our Hearts*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1998; *An Indelible Stain? The Question of Genocide in Australia's History*, Melbourne: Viking, 2001.

[36] J. Boyce, *Van Diemen's Land*, Melbourne: Black Inc, 2008; I. McFarlane, *beyond Awakening: the Aboriginal tribes of north west Tasmania: a history*, Launceston: Fullers Bookshop, 2008.

The works of the rejectionists, important reference points in my study, were represented in the main by Keith Windschuttle in his 2002 work, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History Volume One: Van Diemen's Land 1803-1847.* Windschuttle's rejection of the hypotheses of the Black War, especially the notion of a 'guerrilla campaign' by the Aborigines, and that of the received Aboriginal death toll during the violent outbreaks, were views not supported by my research. My analysis of Arthur's specific actions against the Aborigines, and particularly against the *Mairremmener* People, indicated a purposeful and carefully orchestrated campaign with the objective – both political and self-seeking – of removing the People from the island forever, by what ever legal and practical means at hand.[37] Much of Windschuttle's rebuttal seized upon relatively minor textual infractions such as footnoting and nomenclature. His substantive arguments – particularly that there was no war – are plainly wrong.[38] The list of fellow rejectionists was short. Only one other writer appears to have joined his particular Tasmanian campaign.[39] On the other hand, a large number of historians – Windschuttle's 'orthodox' historians – have leapt to the defence of the received views represented by Ryan's and Reynolds' works. Robert Manne's *Whitewash*, with eighteen contributors, appeared in 2003, containing rebuttals of all of Windschuttle's major arguments. Stuart McIntyre's and Anna Clark's *The History Wars* of the same year similarly rebutted Windschuttle. All those texts, both for and against, have been examined in my research, with appropriate comments in my thesis. As is obvious from my thesis conclusion, I have come down on the side of the 'orthodox'.

In summary, the available literature used to contribute to the final period was extensive, as my bibliography demonstrates. Some sources were unusual: legal cases and legal materials provided information not completely available elsewhere, especially on the issue of banishment of British subjects and the application and effect of martial law. An historic Quaker (Society of Friends) tract from 1838 provided an insight into attempts at 'civilizing' savages through the inculcation of religion, but

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[37] See G.K.Calder, 'Routing a Rebellion or Crushing a Crime Wave? Proclaiming Martial Law and a Call-to-Arms in Van Diemen's Land, 1828-1830', *Legal History*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2008, pp.127-150.

[38] Windschuttle was also not above historical error. In one example, in referring to the 'Tooms Lake massacre' (pp. 279, 280), he failed to realise that Tooms Lake is a man-made lake created by the damming of the Tooms River in the late nineteenth century. Prior to that, it was a swampy depression, frequented by Aboriginal bands as a campsite.

[39] See J.G.Dawson, *Washout: on the academic response to the fabrication of aboriginal history*, Sydney: Macleay Press, 2004. Keith Windschuttle is the publisher of Macleay Press.

also demonstrated the humanitarian aspect of the Evangelical movement.[40] Newspapers and maps again contributed in a major way. My own thesis, submitted in 2005 for an honours degree in History, was a source of valuable information on the respective humanitarianism of George Arthur and James Erskine Calder.

An Afterview

This literature review uses the principles established by Hilton Obenzinger of Stanford University (2005).[41] He defined a literature review as the method of providing the meaningful context of a project within the universe of already existing research. It 'presents the justification ... for your work', that is, why it needs to be conducted; how it is different from other studies, where it will fit within current knowledge, and when completed, what you expect it will contribute to the corpus of knowledge. It therefore requires the assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of previous works, and presents your own research as the dialectic:

hypothesis→thesis→antithesis→synthesis

I believe that my research has successfully undertaken that process, and will add to the corpus of knowledge of the Tasmanians, especially in the explication of the nature of *Mairremmener* society as a unique socio-linguistic group among the several such groups on the island at the time of invasion and colonization. It adds to the narrative of the destruction of Aboriginal societies in Tasmania by using an empathic approach, recovering the "voices" of the members of a lost society: an approach in contrast to past studies which utilise source materials which, in the main, only express the views of the colonizers, not the colonized and dispossessed. It adds particular knowledge of the nature, purpose and routes of the *Markenner*, the vital cultural roads linking the east coast littoral with the Central Plateau: roads which had a deep cultural purpose over the immediate needs of food quest and trade. Beyond the materials found in written form, it utilises other forms to extract the "voices"; forms such as the historic

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[40] *Information Respecting the Aborigines in the British Colonies. Circulated by the Direction of the Meeting for Sufferings. Being Principally Extracts from the Report Presented to the House of Commons, by the Select Committee Appointed on that Subject,* London: Darton & Harvey, 1838. This extremely rare (and valuable) text is held by the Tasmaniana Library, State Library of Tasmania. While not directly referring to Van Diemen's Land, the cases referred to – in North America, South Africa, New Zealand and Australia – presents an accurate and depressing picture of Indigenous dispossession in the British colonies.

[41] H. Obenzinger, Associate Director of Undergraduate Research Programs for Honours Writing, Stanford University, *What Can a Literature Review Do For Me?,* Stanford University, 2005.

maps and legal cases referred to above, but also forms not generally regarded as "literature"; particularly the results of field trips, following the historic routes of the *Markenner*. The value of that form of research cannot be understated. It opened the opportunity to observe the stone quarries, the rock shelters, the campsites, and most importantly, the geographical features such as the famous "skittleballs" on the Central Plateau, features which must have been regarded as "beings" in Aboriginal culture. As discussed in my thesis, all things in the Tasmanians cosmos, animate and inanimate, were beings, having a direct relationship with man. If special topographical features such as the skittleballs, standing 'like the turrets of a castle, in others ranged themselves along like a temple of the Druids' and perhaps the strange outcrop known as "Nicholls Needle" at the southern end of the Ben Lomond Range inspired a spiritual feeling in white explorers, it would equally have the same effect on the People.[42] In addition, the opportunity to follow the likely track of a road traversed for millennia created an empathetic sense of the absence of time and space: the very nature of Aboriginal cosmology. To encounter a stone quarry where the worked stone still lays on the ground from the hands that worked it, perhaps centuries ago, is an experience that cannot be obtained in a written source.[43]

The research involved in my thesis, and that of my colleague, Ian McFarlane on the North West Peoples will perhaps encourage others to undertake research on the several other socio-linguist groups that occupied Tasmania before the white invasion. The cultures of each of those groups were unique, and each underwent different experiences upon invasion and dispossession. In that respect alone, I believe my research has added to the corpus of knowledge of Aboriginal culture in Tasmania.

[42] Ross, *A short excursion to Lake Echo*, p.59.
[43] Seven field trips were undertaken: at Lake Fergus and Skittleball Hill on the Central Plateau; through the Buckland Military Training Area, following the course of the Little Swanport River; through the Eastern Tiers along the Swan and St. Paul's Rivers; and on the Freycinet Peninsula.